

S E R M O N

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Several S U B J E C T S,

B Y

S A M U E L C L A R K E, D. D.

Late Rector of St. *James's*, *Westminster*.

Published from the A U T H O R 's Manuscript

By J O H N C L A R K E, D. D. Dean of *Sarum*.

V O L. VI.

The S E V E N T H E D I T I O N.



L O N D O N:

Printed for J. and P. K N A P T O N, in *Ludgate-Street*.

M D C C X L I X.

S E R M O N

ON

Several Subjects

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Author of the Dictionary of the English Language

Published from the 1st edition of the Manuscript
by John Galt, D.D. Dean of Durham

VOL. II.

The Second Edition



Printed in London by J. Galt, Dean of Durham

CONTENTS.

SERMON I. Of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

[Preached on Whitsunday.]

MATT. xii. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men : And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this World, neither in the World to come.

Page 1

SERM. II. III. Of receiving the *Holy Ghost*.[Preached on *Whitsunday*.]

ACTS xix. 2, 3.

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? 19, 35

SERM. IV. Of the Power and Authority of CHRIST.

[Preached on *Trinity-Sunday*.]

St MATT. xxviii. part 18, 19, 20.

All power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth: Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you-always even unto the End of the World. 51

SERM.

CONTENTS.

SERM. V. Of the different Gifts of the Spirit.

[Preached on Trinity-Sunday.]

I COR. xii. 4, 5, 6.

*Now there are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit;
and there are differences of Administrations, but the same
Lord; And there are diversities of Operations, but it is
the same God, which worketh all in all.* 69

SERM. VI. Of the Desire of Knowledge.

[Preached on Trinity-Sunday.]

DEUT. xxix. 29.

*The Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those
things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our
children for ever, that we may do all the words of this
law.* 85

SERM. VII. Of the Testimony of our SAVIOUR'S
Doctrines.

[Preached on Trinity-Sunday.]

1 JOHN v. 8.

*And there are three that bear Witness in Earth, the Spirit
and the Water and the Blood; And these Three agree
in One.*

101

SERM. VIII. IX. Of our SAVIOUR'S Temptation.

[Preached in Lent.]

MATT. iv. 1.

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to
be tempted of the Devil.*

115, 129

SERM.

SERM. X. The Shortness and Vanity of Humane Life.

[Preached in Lent.]

JOB v. 6, 7.

Although Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground; yet Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upward.

145

SERM. XI. Of Resignation to the Divine Will in Affliction.

[Preached in Lent.]

JOB v. 6, 7.

Although Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground; yet Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upward.

159

SERM.

SERM. XII. The End of GOD's afflicting Men.

[Preached in Lent.]

JOB v. 6, 7.

Although Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground ; yet Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upward. 173

SERM. XIII. The Event of Things not always answerable to Second Causes.

[A Fast Sermon.]

ECCLES. ix. 11.

I returned, and saw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to men of Skill ; but Time and Chance happeneth to them All. 187

SERM.

SERM. XIV. The Practice of Wickedness generally attended with great Evil.

[An Inauguration Sermon.]

PROV. xiii. 21.

Evil pursueth Sinners; but to the Righteous, Good shall be repaid. 203

SERM. XV. The Character of oppressive Power in Religion.

[Preached on the 5th of November.]

DAN. vii. 23.

Which shall be diverse from all Kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 217

SERM.

SERM. XVI. Providential Deliverances from Slavery.

[Preached on the 5th of November.]

PSAL. xxxiii. 10.

*The Lord bringeth the Counsel of the Heathen to nought ;
he maketh the Devices of the People of none Effect.* 231

SERM. XVII. Of the Duty of Charity.

[A Charity Sermon.]

St MATT. v. 48.

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in
Heaven is perfect.* 251

SERM.

CONTENTS.

xi

SERM. XVIII. Of the Necessity of Offences arising
against the Gospel.

LUKE xvii. 1.

*It is impossible but that Offences will come; but wo unto Him
through whom they come.*

269

SERMON

SEVEN. XVII. Of the Necessity of Offences arising
against the Gospel.

From xviii. 1.

It is not that the Offences will come, but the more they
come, the more they come.

SEVEN

H
C
S
P

S E R M O N I.

Of the Sin against the *Holy Ghost*.

[*Preached on Whitsunday.*]

M A T. xii. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; But the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men : And whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this World, neither in the World to come.

WE are met together This day, thankfully to commemorate the greatest and most important Gift, that was ever sent down from Heaven upon the Sons of Men ; the Gift of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost ; that plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit, which was the Accomplishment both of the Predictions of all the *Antient* Prophets, and of all the]

later Promises made by our Saviour to his Disciples ; that Gift of Tongues, which was so peculiarly proper and necessary a *Means* to the great End for which it was designed, and the *Effects* whereof have been of such universal Extent over the Face of the whole Earth. The Gospel of *Christ*, was not, like the Religion of *Moses*, to be confined to One Nation or People ; but • to be preached, as the general Doctrine of Salvation, to All Mankind : And the Gift of Tongues, wherewith the first Preachers of it were indued, was equally both a *necessary Means* to enable them to preach to all Nations, and a *strong Proof* of the Truth of that Doctrine which they were so miraculously enabled to spread. 'Twas a *necessary Means*, without which the Gospel could by no labour whatsoever ; no, not by the most indefatigable Industry, in compassing Sea and Land to make a Profelyte ; have in the Course of *many Ages* been propagated thro' so many different and so remote Countries, as by This means it was spread in the space of *not many years*. And at the same Time that it so *sweetly* conveyed the *Knowledge* of the Gospel, 'twas likewise a *strong Proof* of the *Truth* of the Doctrine itself, both upon account of the *Greatness* of the Miracle in its own Nature, and the *Clearness* of the Evidence wherewith the Miracle was set forth. The *Greatness* of the Miracle in its own Nature, consisted in This ; that it was worked upon *many Persons*, at one and the same Time ; that it was a producing in them such an Effect, as was equivalent to the Result of a *long Habit* ; and that it was not a short and transitory Effect, but of a *permanent Duration* ; and, in its *whole Continuance*, equally miraculous, as in the first Operation. Upon the whole therefore, 'twas such a Miracle in all its Circumstances,

as there had been no Example of any like it before ; and probably referred to by our Saviour in that Promise, *Job. xiv. 12. He that believeth on me ; the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater Works than these shall he do.* The Clearness of the Evidence wherewith the Miracle was set forth, consisted in This ; that Matters were so disposed by the Wisdom of Providence, that the bitterest Enemies of the Apostles, did themselves, by their own Testimony, remove the only Objections that could be brought against it. For, all that could possibly be alledged against the Truth of the Miracle, was, either that the New Tongues wherewith the Apostles began to speak, were *not real languages* ; or, if they were, that then the Apostles, who spake them, had *studied and been taught* those Languages before. But now the former of these Suspicions, was removed by the Strangers then present ; and the latter was taken off, by the Inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves. The Strangers then present, who understood the Languages, took off that foolish Objection, *Acts ii. 13.* that the Apostles were *full of new Wine* ; for they heard and understood them *speaking in their own Tongues, the wonderful Works of God,* ver. 11. And the Inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves, removed the other Suspicion, of their having been *taught* the Languages ; for they knew them to be illiterate men, and said, *Are not all these, that speak, Galileans ?* ver. 7 ; just as they had formerly said concerning Jesus himself ; *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?* *Joh. vii. 14.* And, *whence has this man these things ? — Is not this the Carpenter, and Son of Mary ? the Brother of James and Joses and Juda and Simon ? and are not his Sisters here with us ?* *St Mar. vi. 2.* Both the Strangers therefore, and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves, bore Testi-

mony to the Truth of the Miracle, even at the same Time and with the same Arguments by which they opposed it; And they were of all Others the *best* and most *competent* Witnesses, for that *very* reason, because they were *prejudiced* against the *Thing*, and *Enemies* to the *Men*. Besides all which; the Miracle itself (as I before observed) was *permanent* in its *Continuance*, as well as *publick* in the *manner* of its being worked; So that in all respects, it was both the *Greatest* in the *Nature* of the *Thing* itself, and the *Clearest* in the *Evidence* of its being *really performed*; that can possibly be imagined. To *Us* indeed, who live at This Distance of Time, the Evidence of a Fact done so many Ages since, cannot be so perfectly and entirely clear, as to those who were themselves Eye-Witnesses and Ear-Witnesses of it. But if there *are* Matters of Fact so attested, even at much *greater* Distances of Time, as that no reasonable Person can in the least question the Truth of them; and *This*, of all Other distant Facts that are recorded in any History, has the greatest and most remarkable Attestations; the Evidence of it even to *Us*, can with as little Reason be rejected, as that which was offered to those very Persons who lived at the Time. Nay, in *some* respects, we may seem even to have the *Advantage* over them, in Point of Certainty of our not being deceived. For, besides that we are Now free, from many of those inveterate Prejudices, which both *Jews* and *Gentiles* then laboured under; and which we cannot assure ourselves we should less obstinately have adhered to, than They did; We have moreover, what They at that Time could not have; We have the concurrent *Examination* of *many* Ages, and the Advantage of considering and comparing the *Objections of Adversaries* on all Sides; We have the *additional* Proofs, arising from the con-

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tinued Effects of this miraculous Power, in different Times and Places; We have seen the Truth of the Apostles Doctrine confirmed, by the accomplishment of several Prophecies; by the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; by the final scattering of the whole Nation of the *Jews*; by the incredible Success, and universal Propagation of the Gospel, over all the World.

N o w These *additional* Confirmations, of the Truth of the Doctrine delivered by the Holy Ghost in the Revelation of the Gospel, are to *Us*; (what the Strength of the Evidence arising from the Nearness of the Time, was to *Them* who lived in the first Ages;) a proportionable *Aggravation* of the Guilt of Unbelief, in those who, notwithstanding all reasonable Proof, yet obstinately reject the Counsel of God against Themselves, by *disbelieving* or (which is the same thing) *disobeying* the Gospel. For the Sin of Unbelief, does not consist in *not believing* what men have *no* sufficient Reason to *believe*; but in refusing to attend to reasonable Evidence; in being unwilling to examine into a Doctrine, which would oblige them to amend their Lives; in *bating the Light*, and fearing to come into it, *lest their Deeds should be reprov'd* thereby. *This is the Condemnation*, saith our Saviour, *that Light is come into the World, and men loved Darknefs rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil*, Joh. iii. 19. *They are of those*, (as Job elegantly expresses it) *who rebel against the Light; they know not the Ways thereof, nor abide in the Paths thereof*, ch. xxiv. 13. Upon this Account; (that Knowledge, or, which is all one,) the Means of Knowledge fairly proposed to men, is the great Aggravation of the Sin of Unbelief; shewing plainly, that in such Case nothing but Obstinacy and the Love of Sin, is the real Cause of their rejecting the Truth: Upon this Account,

I say, it is, that our Saviour thus declares concerning the *Jews*, St *Joh.* xv. 22. 'If I had not come, and 'spoke unto them, they had not had Sin; but now 'they have no cloke for their Sin:' and *ver.* 24. 'If I 'had not done among them the Works which none o-
 'ther man did, they had not had Sin; but now they 'have both seen and hated, both me and my Father.' And to the Cities, *wherein most of his mighty Works were done*, Mat. xi. 21; 'Wo unto thee, Chorazin; 'Wo unto thee, Bethsaida, For if the mighty Works 'which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and 'Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth 'and Ashes: But I say unto you, It shall be more to-
 'lerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, 'than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art ex-
 'alted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell; 'For if the mighty Works which have been done in 'Thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have re-
 'mained until this Day; But I say unto you, that it 'shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the
 'day of judgment, than for you.' And upon the same Ground it is, that the Apostle in like manner so highly aggravates the Sin of rejecting the Gospel, *Heb.* xii. 25. 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: For if
 'They escaped not, who refused him that spake on 'Earth; much more shall not we escape, if we turn
 'away from him that speaketh from Heaven.' And *eb.* ii. 2. 'If the Word spoken by Angels, was stedfast; 'and every transgression and disobedience received a just
 'recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we 'neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to
 'be spoken by the Lord, and were confirmed unto us
 'by them that heard him: God also bearing them wit-
 'ness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers
 'miracles

miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will.' A careful Consideration of the Sense of these Passages, will lead us to the true meaning of the like, but more difficult, and seemingly more severe Expressions in the Text. For, if the great *Aggravation of Sin*, be the *Knowledge of our Duty*; and the *Condemnation of the World*, be the *Light that is come into it*; and the *Guilt of the Jews*, was proportionally greater than that of other men, for *this* reason, because our Saviour *did among them the Works which no other man did* elsewhere; and those particular *Cities of the Jews*, wherein *most of our Lord's mighty Works were done*, were condemned with a more particularly severe judgment; and in general, *every Sin against the Word spoken by our Lord himself from Heaven*, and confirmed with *Signs and Wonders*, and with *divers Miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, can less expect to escape unpunished, than those committed against the Law given by *Angels* and delivered by *Moses upon Earth*: It follows, that if there be Any Sin, more heinous than All others; if there be Any Guilt, which in Event will terminate in final Perdition; if there be any Crime, of which it may beforehand be judged that it will never be expiated; it must be Mens obstinately sinning against That Light, a greater and clearer than which, will never be afforded them; it must be mens hardning themselves in such a Disposition, as in the Nature of the Thing cuts off from itself the Means of Recovery; it must be such a Corruption and Depravity of Mind, as like a Mortal and incurable Disease, precludes all Methods of applying a Remedy. And This, 'tis evident, cannot be any *particular Sin*, but a *general and total Rejection of the only Means of recovering from Sin*. The Generation that lived at the Time of the Flood, sinned

sinned unpardonably ; not by any of the *particular* Crimes they were guilty of ; but by rejecting the preaching of Righteous *Noah*, which was the last Call God vouchsafed them to Repentance ; For he resolved, that whosoever blasphemed the preaching of *Noah*, should never be forgiven, but be destroyed by the Flood. The Inhabitants of *Sodom* sinned unpardonably ; not by any of their *particular* Wickednesses, which yet were extremely heinous ; but by refusing to hear *Lot's* Exhortations to Repentance ; who was the last Monitor God intended to send them ; and he determined judicially, that whosoever blasphemed the preaching of *Lot*, it should never be forgiven him, but he should be destroyed in the Desolation by Fire. The Pharisees in our Saviour's Time, sinned likewise unpardonably ; not by any of the *particular* Iniquities, with which they are charged in the Gospel ; (For the whole *Design* of our Lord's preaching, was to exhort them to *repent* of these, that they might be forgiven ;) But they sinned unpardonably, by opprobriously rejecting our Lord's Invitation to Repentance ; and scornfully reviling the greatest and the last Miracles, which he intended to work in that Place amongst them ; And therefore, after This, God resolved to leave them to themselves, to live and die in their Sins without further conviction, and *never to be forgiven*, or to have any New Means of Pardon offered them, ' either in ' this World or in the World to come. *Verily* I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be ' forgiven unto men ; but the Blasphemy against the ' Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men : And ' whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, ' it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him ' neither

‘neither in this World neither in the World to come.’ The Words are the severest Words in the whole New Testament; and therefore ought very carefully to be considered and explained, in their true and proper meaning; that neither melancholy pious persons may on the one hand be terrified with Fears of what they have not the least reason to apply to themselves; nor wilful and incorrigible Sinners, presumptuously imagine themselves to be in less danger than they really are.

THE Occasion of the Words, was This. Our Saviour having cast out a Devil, and healed the diseased person, so that he who had been dumb and blind, immediately both spake and saw; the People, astonished at the greatness of the Miracle, began to express their opinion, that he must needs be the Messiah, *ver. 23.* Upon which, certain Pharisees, hardened by their Malice and Hypocrisy beyond all Conviction, suggested to the People, that possibly it might be by Confederacy with the Prince of the Devils, that Jesus thus cast out Devils, *ver. 24.* To this our Saviour replies; Whatever is done by Confederacy with evil Spirits, must be something that promotes the *Interest* of the Kingdom of Satan, and not any thing directly *contrary* thereto; unless a Kingdom can be supported by Divisions within itself; *ver. 25.* ‘Every Kingdom divided against itself, is brought to Desolation; and every City or House divided against itself, shall not stand.’ If therefore casting out Devils, and that in Proof of a Doctrine *opposite* to the *Interest* of the Kingdom of Satan, be a thing not to be done by Confederacy with Evil Spirits; then nothing, says he, can be more absurdly malicious, than this your Accusation of me, *ver. 26.* *If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his Kingdom stand?* But if the thing itself be apparent; and

and ye cannot without extreme Unreasonableness and the utmost Degree of Malice, deny it, that what I do, is by the immediate Power of God ; then here is a convincing Proof offered you, that I am truly sent from God, and that the Doctrine I preach is for the establishment of *His Kingdom* ; *ver. 28 ; But if I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you.* For, as one's entering into a strong man's house, and forcibly dispossessing him of his Goods, is an evident Demonstration, that he who so enters, is stronger and comes with greater Authority, than he that had the first Possession : So my breaking the Power of Devils, by casting them out of the Bodies, and destroying their Dominion over the Minds of Men, is an undeniable Proof of my being sent by a Power and Authority greater than theirs ; *ver. 29. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his goods ?* The connexion of the following Words, *ver. 30,* is more difficult to be understood ; for they may seem at first sight to be abrupt, and independent on what went before ; *He that is not with me, is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad :* But the True intent of them, is, to illustrate and confirm what went before, in some such Manner as This : When two great Powers are at [open and] irreconcilable Enmity against each other, even he who *only forbears* joining with one side, is thereupon reputed to be against it ; according to the usual Proverb, *He that is not with me, is against me :* How much more therefore (infers our Saviour) ought ye to believe that *I*, who have actually done *so much* towards destroying the Power and Kingdom of the Devil, am really and in Truth acting in opposition against him, and not by confederacy with him !

him ! And then he adds in the Words of the Text ; Wherefore *I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men.* The meaning is : Since 'tis as evident, as 'tis possible for any thing to be, that the Works which I do, are by the immediate Authority of God, and by the Power of his Holy Spirit ; Therefore whosoever shall resist this great Conviction, by so unreasonable and obstinate a degree of Malice, as to ascribe these very Works, these greatest and highest Evidences of Divine Authority, to the Power of the Devil ; To such a Person God will never afford any further Means of Conviction : And therefore tho' all other Blasphemies and all particular Sins whatsoever, may be repented of and forgiven ; yet He who is guilty of *this Total* corruption of Mind, this maliciously perverse and desperate Rejecting of the greatest and highest Conviction that God vouchsafes to afford men ; shall never have granted him any further Means, of Repentance and Forgiveness. Every particular Kind, or Sort of Sin, whatsoever ; and all other *Blasphemies* whatsoever, shall be forgiven men : Even he that speaks against *Me*, (says our Lord,) in all *other* respects ; or calumniates *me*, upon any *other* account whatsoever ; and is not at first convinced by *my* preaching and Exhortations ; may yet afterwards be convinced by the mighty *Works* he shall see, and by the *Power* of the *Holy Ghost* ; and so repent and be forgiven : But he who obstinately resists even this greatest and most extraordinary Method, which God has thought fit to make use of for the Conversion of Mankind ; and maliciously reviles the most evident Operations of the Spirit of God ; such a One has no further Means left, by which he might be convinced and brought to Repentance, and consequently

consequently he can never be forgiven. *Whoſoever ſpeaketh a Word againſt the Son of Man, it ſhall be forgiven him ; but whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.*

THE Connexion and general Meaning of the Words being thus explained, I ſhall for the further and more particular clearing of what difficulties may remain in them, and for removing ſuch Scruples as may be apt to ariſe from them, take leave to add the following Obſervations, 1^{ſt}, That our Saviour does not ſay, *The Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, but *the Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, ſhall not be forgiven. Neither in *This*, nor in any other Paſſage of Scripture, is there any mention at all of a Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. For indeed our Saviour is not here ſpeaking of a Sin, of a particular Act of Sin ; ſeeing on the contrary he expreſſly declares, that *All Manner of Sin*, nay and all Blaſphemy alſo *wherewith ſoever men ſhall blaſpheme, ſhall be forgiven unto them* ; But he ſpeaks of a certain incurable malicious Diſpoſition of Mind, which by venting itſelf under ſuch peculiar Circumſtances in Blaſphemy againſt the *greateſt* of our Lord's Miracles, plainly diſcovered itſelf to be incapable of Amendment, by any Means which God would vouchſafe to make uſe of. And 'twas not the particular Act of Blaſpheming, that itſelf rendered the Men unpardonable ; But *That particular Blaſphemy*, in *thoſe* particular Circumſtances, was a Sign only or an Evidence, which our Saviour knew and declared to proceed from an incurable and therefore unpardonable malicious Diſpoſition of Mind. And This is evident from the Words immediately following the Text, whoſe connexion uſually is not ſufficiently taken Notice of. For thus, when our Saviour had

had declared the Pharisees Blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, to be *unpardonable*; he adds, as a *Reason*, in the very next Words, ver. 33. *Either make the Tree good, and his Fruit good; or else make the Tree corrupt, and his Fruit corrupt: For the Tree is known by his Fruit. O generation of Vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh.* 'Tis evident therefore, that not for the particular *Act* of Blasphemy, but for That *incurably wicked Disposition of Mind*, of which Blaspheming in those Circumstances was a plain indication, were these Pharisees declared to be unpardonable. Nothing therefore can be gathered from this passage, concerning any particular *Sin against the Holy Ghost*, (as Many have without Reason imagined,) in its own Nature unpardonable. For in reality *All wilful Sin whatsoever is against the Holy Ghost*; against the good Motions, against the guidance and direction of the good Spirit of God; Yet not *every*, nay not *any* wilful Sin is upon that Account absolutely unpardonable; as appears from the whole Tenor of Scripture: Much less are blasphemous *Thoughts*, which melancholy pious persons are apt to complain of, and which therefore are not wilful at all; much less (I say) are uneasy blasphemous *Thoughts*, of This highest Malignity; when, generally speaking, they are not so much as *chosen* or *wilful Sins at all*. Even those *wilful Sins against* or in opposition to *the Holy Ghost*, (which yet is a Phrase never used in Scripture-language,) are in the Gospel always supposed pardonable upon true Repentance. The Blasphemy our Saviour here speaks of, is a thing of another Nature; 'Tis not singly sinning *against the Person of the Holy Ghost*, or *against his good Motions*, but presumptuously *reviling the greatest Works*

of the Holy Ghost, and so obstinately rejecting the last and solemnest Call to Repentance. And This is further evident from what our Saviour adds, that *he who speaks against the Son of Man, might be forgiven* ; As the *Jews*, who reproached him as being *the Carpenter's Son*, as a *wine-bibber and a glutton*, as a *Friend of publicans and Sinners*, might be forgiven, if they repented upon the further Conviction that should afterward be afforded them : But he that blasphemed against the *Holy Ghost*, against the highest Evidence of our Lord's *greatest Miracles*, was never to be forgiven ; Not because even *This* was *in itself* and in the Nature of the Thing, absolutely unpardonable ; (For no reason can be given why speaking against the *Person* of the *Holy Ghost*, should be *in itself* of greater Malignity, than speaking against *Christ*, or against *God the Father Himself* ;) but because it was an obstinate rejecting the last means of Conviction, and an evident Token of incorrigible Malice. Among the Antient Jews, *Heb. x. 28. He that despised Moses's Law, died without Mercy* : Our Saviour in like manner declares, that he who by blaspheming against the Works of the Holy Spirit, despises and rejects the final Offer of *the Gospel*, he also shall perish without Mercy. And This possibly may be the meaning of the other Phrase ; that such a malicious Temper should not be pardoned, *neither in this World neither in the World to come* ; namely, neither in that present Age, which was the Time of the *Law* ; nor in the Age to come, which is the Times of the *Messiah*. 2dly, It is reasonable to suppose, that this peremptory declaration of our Saviour, concerning the unpardonable Wickedness of those who thus blasphemously rejected the highest Evidence of the Gospel, ought to be applied and understood of *those Persons*

only, who themselves *saw* his Miracles, and rejected them purely out of a wicked Disposition ; namely, the Pharisees, and unbelieving *Jews*. For, tho' those who live in after Ages, and are not Eye-witnesses of his mighty Works, have indeed nevertheless sufficient Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel ; and in some few respects, as I before intimated, have even the Advantage over the greater Part of those who lived at That Time ; yet, These Advantages arising from Arguments of Abstract Reason, Consideration, and Inquiry ; which work differently upon Men at different Times ; and may prevail afterwards, upon more mature consideration, over the same person who at present rejects them ; therefore no man's rejecting the Gospel Now, can be known or supposed to proceed from the like incurable Malignity, as the Blasphemy of those who themselves *saw* our Lord's Miracles. 3dly, It may yet further be conceived, not without probability, that these severe Words of our Saviour, are applicable, not even so much as to *All* Those Pharisees, who saw and rejected his Miracles ; but to those only, who saw *That* particular great Miracle recorded in This chapter, and who reviled it with *That* particular malicious Blasphemy, of ascribing it to the Power of the Unclean Spirit. For so St Mark intimates, by adding in the Words immediately following the Text, *Mar. iii. 30.* that Jesus spake thus severely of them, because *they said, he hath an unclean Spirit*. And indeed, since we do not find that any Persons whatsoever were ever rejected from Baptism ; 'tis reasonable to suppose, that many of the other Pharisees, who had *seen* and perhaps also *spoken against* our Saviour's Miracles, might yet afterwards repent, be baptized, and obtain forgiveness. But *These*, who blasphemed in This particular manner, he *knew* were incorrigible, and perhaps judicially also

resolved that no farther means should be offered them. And then the Words of the Text will be prophetical, and equivalent to those other expressions, *Job. x. 26 ; viii. 21, 24. Ye are none of my sheep, ye shall die in your Sins : which is the same as to say, Ye will never be forgiven neither in this World neither in the World to come.* 4^{thly}, If this Threatning is to be extended to any other Persons, it may seem most properly to reach the case of such, as, after the giving of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, should in like manner revile that miraculous Dispensation. But there is no reason to think (as some have done,) that it belongs *only* to such as should blaspheme *after That* : For the Power of the Holy Ghost did as visibly appear to the Pharisees with whom our Saviour Now conversed, as to those who saw that wonderful gift at Pentecost ; and the Words themselves seem *more naturally* to confine it to *those Pharisees only* : At least, it can be applied to Both, *only* upon account of their *seeing* the Miracles ; which was the highest Evidence that could possibly be given them. And if there had been any such thing as any other Sin against the Holy Ghost, which Christians in after-times could be in danger of falling into ; it cannot be imagined, but the Apostles in their Epistles, wherein they are diligent to caution men against all other Crimes, would have been much fuller and more pressing in their warnings to take heed of *This*, as being of more desperate consequence than any other whatsoever : Whereas, on the contrary, we find not in their writings any direct mention of any such Sin at all. 5^{thly} and *Lastly*, Yet This we may observe, that the Apostles frequently warn men to take heed of the *Approaches* towards the like Guilt, and of Sins which may seem next in Malignity ; such as wilful Apostacy from the Profession, or from the whole

whole Practice of Religion ; Concerning Persons guilty of which Crimes 'tis said, that 'tis *impossible* [exceeding difficult] *to renew them to Repentance* ; that there remains no more Sacrifice for their Sin, Heb. x. 26, —29 ; that like *Esau*, they *for one morsel sell their birth-right* ; and, when 'tis joined with obstinacy, that their Sin is *unto Death*, i. e. that 'tis like a disease which appears to be *mortal*, with little or no Hopes of Recovery. From which God of his infinite Mercy, &c.

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S E R M O N II.

Of receiving the *Holy Ghost*.

[*Preached on Whitsunday.*]

ACTS xix. 2, 3.

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized?

IN the following Discourse upon these words, I shall *first* endeavour briefly to explain the full Meaning of the several *particular* expressions here made use of by the Apostle, and by the new Converts with whom he discoursed; and then, *secondly*, I shall consider the *general* doctrine, concerning the Nature and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which was the Foundation and Occasion of the *particular* incidents referred to in the Text. It was the Method of the Apostles, when they had preached the Gospel in a Number of places, to return after a certain Time through the same places where they had formerly preached; to confirm, and strengthen the Believers;

Believers ; to set in order, the several Churches ; to redress, what was amiss ; to exhort and comfort them, under the Persecutions they were likely to meet with ; and to examine how far they preserved pure and uncorrupt, That Doctrine which had been delivered unto them, with regard both to Faith and Practice. *Acts xv. 36. Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our Brethren, in every City where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. Ver. 41. And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches. And ch. xvi. 5. And so were the churches established in the Faith, and increased in Number daily.* The Text, with the foregoing and following verses, is an Account of part of this Progress of St Paul in visiting the Churches, and of the Design and Effect of that his journey amongst them. *Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus, ver. 1. And finding certain Disciples, he said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* As the Apostles were themselves baptized with the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, so it pleased God, at the first preaching of the Gospel, generally to endue others likewise, who were baptized by the Apostles, with some visible gifts of the Holy Ghost, such as speaking with tongues, prophesying, and the like. Not that This was the principal and most valuable Effect of Baptism ; For *That* consisted in the internal Benefit on the Mind of the persons themselves, Remission of past Sin, and Sanctification of the Spirit for the future : But in order to a more effectual conviction of Others to whom the Gospel was to be preached, and for the speedier propagating of the Doctrine of Christ, it pleased God that the Power of the Holy Ghost in Them who were baptized, discovered itself in those first times by external Evidences and miraculous

Opera-

Operations: *Tongues*, says the Apostle, *are for a Sign, not for them that believe, but for them that believe not*, 1 Cor. xiv. 22. Tho' therefore these miraculous Effects of the Spirit conferred in Baptism, were not the *principal* with regard to the persons *themselves* on whom they were conferred; yet being the most *visible* to *others*, and at that Time generally attending the other more secret and invisible Gifts, it was very natural for the Apostle, when he came to examine into the State of such Disciples as had been converted in his absence, to express himself after this manner, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* The Matter he was chiefly concerned to know, was the *thing signified*; whether they were true Believers, and had received the Gospel in the Truth and Purity thereof. But the thing demanded in his question, was the *Evidence* or *external Sign*; Has God bestowed upon you those visible Gifts of the Spirit, which are now the usual Characteristicks of the Disciples of Christ? To this Question, they returned a very surprizing Answer indeed, if our Translation express it rightly; *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*: As if any either *Jew* or even *Gentile*, much less Christian Convert, could possibly have been so ignorant, as to know nothing at all, nor ever have heard any thing, either of the Being or Influences of the Spirit of God. The Meaning evidently is, (and so the words ought to have been rendred,) *We have not heard that there has been any such Giving of the Holy Ghost*; We have neither received any of these extraordinary Gifts *ourselves*, nor been informed of their being bestowed on *others*, or that we were to *expect* any such thing upon our believing. And indeed it may seem very wonderful, how it should happen they *could* be, even so far ignorant

rant as This. But *the reason* appears, in what follows. For when the Apostle hereupon asks them again ; *Unto what then were ye baptized*, if not unto the expectation of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost ? they reply, ver. 3. *Unto John's Baptism*. Which Baptism of *John the Baptist* being preparatory only to the reception of Christ, and intended only as a *Means* to a further *End* ; 'tis no wonder it was not accompanied with the Effusion of those perfective Gifts of the Spirit, which would have made needless that Baptism into the Name of Christ, which was to follow. This therefore is the Meaning of what the Apostle thereupon answers them again, ver. 4. *John* (says he) *verily baptized with the Baptism of Repentance* ; saying unto the people, *that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*. The Intention of which Reply, is ; *John indeed baptized you* (saith he) *into the expectation of the Messiah that was to come* ; But before you enjoy the Benefit of his *actual Coming*, you must verify that expectation by receiving him now he is come ; and fulfil the intention of *John's Baptism*, by being consequently baptized into the Name of *Christ*. *John's Baptism* was but a *Promise* or Declaration of your *Intention*, of being afterwards baptized into *Christ* ; And the Advantage you expect from being baptized by *John*, can be made good to you only by fulfilling that *Promise*, in embracing the Doctrine and the Religion of *Christ*. When they heard This, ver. 5. *they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus* ; And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied.

THE Occasion and Meaning of the words being thus explained, we may from this History, whereof the words

words of the Text contain the principal circumstances, make the following Observations.

1st, THAT the Nature and Spirit of the Christian Religion, is to lay as little stress as possible upon all *external* Rites; and to have the greatest regard that can be, to the *moral* Qualifications of mens Minds. The *Persons* to whom St Paul puts the Question in the Text, are, in the verse before, stiled *Disciples* or Believers, that is, *Christians*; though they had been instructed in nothing yet, but in the Doctrine of *John the Baptist*. Repentance from dead works, and Reformation of Life, and a preparatory Disposition to receive the Will of God when made known to them by the Messias to come, was here judged sufficient to denominate men *Disciples*; even *before* they had been *baptized* into the Name of *Christ*, or had received any of the *external Gifts* of the Holy Ghost, or had so much as *heard* that such Gifts were to be bestowed upon them. There is *no external Rite* in matters of Religion, more positively and expressly commanded by God, or more indispensably and without any exception required by our Saviour, than that of *Baptism*: *Except a man be born*, saith he, *of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*: And yet even in *This very case* of so expresse a Command, (to show how much Religion is judged of in the sight of God by the moral and virtuous Disposition of the Heart, more than by the outward Form,) there are *many* instances in Scripture, where the *inward* Disposition has been accepted instead of the *outward* Form; but *no* case, where the *Form* or *Ceremony* has in any wise supplied the want of the *inward* Disposition. The Thief upon the Cross was assured by our Saviour,* that he should be with him That day in Paradise; because in the Disposition of his
Heart

Heart he was fitly qualified for Baptism, though there was no possibility of his having the Ceremony performed upon him. The Persons mentioned in the Text, had they died before their being baptized in the Name of Christ; it cannot be questioned, but that those whom the inspired Writer calls *Disciples here*, would by our Lord have been acknowledged for his true Disciples *hereafter*. Cornelius the good Centurion, was *before his Baptism* filled with the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit: And *no reason* can be conceived why That Testimony of the Divine Favour should be conferred upon him just *before* his Baptism, which the Apostles themselves expected could not have been bestowed till *after* it; but only that the Spirit of God thought it of importance to declare in so extraordinary a manner, that even where to the Use of a Form or Ceremony God *has* annexed his Gifts, yet even there, not *upon account of* the Form, or the Rite itself, but upon account of the *inward Qualifications* of the *Mind*, does he bestow his spiritual Blessings. In the regular Administration of Baptism itself, 'tis not the *washing away of the Filth of the Flesh*, that saveth us; but *the Answer of a good Conscience towards God*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Many *Martyrs* in the Primitive times, upon their professing their Faith in Christ, were *immediately* hurried away to bear Testimony for him with their Blood: And no man doubted, but that they who *in reality* were buried *with him* and *for him* into Death; were at least equallized with those, who by Baptism died with him only *in a Figure*. *Infants*, who die unbaptized; unavoidably, and not possibly by any fault of their own; cannot with reason be worse and more hardly thought of, than *grown persons* in the like condition. For concerning *Infants*, as *Infants*, and merely upon Account of their Innocency, it is, that

that our Saviour affirms, that *of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*. And the reason why they are saved, is not because they are baptized; but they are therefore baptized, because they are capable of Salvation; They are therefore fit to be admitted into the Body of God's Church on Earth, because they are by their Innocence qualified to become Members of his eternal Kingdom in Heaven. Nevertheless, though the thing signified itself, is always of much more importance than the Sign; and often accepted by God in the stead of and without the external Form; yet this is always so to be understood, when the external Form cannot be had. For where, by the person's own wilful and contemptuous neglect, any Ceremony of God's express appointment is omitted; there be that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God; who has also annexed to what means he pleaseth, the Gift of his Holy Spirit. Except a man be born of Water and of the Spirit, saith our Saviour; except he that has the Means and Opportunity of doing it, makes use of those Means of Grace which God has been pleased to appoint; 'tis reasonable he should fall short of the Grace itself, and be cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Except ye Eat my Flesh and Drink my Blood, saith our Lord in another place; His principal Meaning is, except ye receive my Doctrine, and, by obeying it, incorporate yourselves into my spiritual Body; ye have no Life in you: This (I say) is plainly his principal Meaning, because the words were spoken before any external Symbols of his Body and Blood were instituted: Yet, when such Sacramental Symbols were appointed; then it became the Duty of every sincere Christian, not only to eat our Lord's Flesh and drink his Blood spiritually; not only so to imbibe his his Doctrine, as to make it the Support and Nourish-

ment of a Spiritual Life, the Spring and Ground-work of a Holy and Virtuous Conversation; but it became their Duty also to participate of the *External Sacrament*, and to make use of the *Means*, as well as desire the *End*, of Christ's own Appointment. The *Disciples* in the Text, when they heard St Paul preach about the Gift of the Holy Ghost, immediately they were baptized *in the Name of the Lord Jesus*; And *without* so doing, they would not have received the Gifts of the Spirit, notwithstanding that the Text does *before* call them *Disciples*, upon their having been baptized with the Baptism of Repentance by *John*. This shows how well consistent, the *Necessity* of observing any Rite or Ceremony of God's own Appointment is, with the Christian Religion's laying at the same time *no stress at all* upon the *external* Form or Ceremony itself, but only on the *internal* moral Disposition or virtuous Qualification of the Mind. To which *inward* Qualification of Mind, great regard is always shown in Scripture, even where *all external* Advantages have been wanting. Thus to the Scribe who was so well-disposed, as to judge that the Love of God and of our Neighbour, was more valuable than all whole burnt-offerings; our Saviour immediately replies, *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, Mar. xii. 34. Of the *young man* who had observed the Commandments from his youth, 'tis recorded that *Jesus beholding him loved him*, Mar. x. 21. To the Syrophœnician woman, whom at first our Lord seemed to reject with great severity, for not being of the house of *Israel*; yet at length he replies, *O woman, great is thy Faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt*, Matt. xv. 28. And of the *Gentiles themselves*, St Paul makes no scruple to affirm, that their Uncircumcision, if they keep the Righteous-

ness

ness of the Law, shall be counted unto them for Circumcision, *Rom. ii. 26.* But now, on the *other* side, no *external* Advantages, no *Rites* or Observations whatsoever, are ever accepted in the stead of, or without, the *inward* Moral and virtuous Disposition of the Heart and Mind. Not *Baptism* itself; not the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*; not even the *miraculous Gifts* and Graces of the Holy Ghost, are of any avail to an unrighteous person. 'Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, 'and in thy Name have cast out devils, and in thy 'Name done many wonderful works? And then will I 'profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from 'me, ye that work iniquity,' *Matt. vii. 22.*

2. THE next Observation we may draw from the words of the Text, is, that *every* Disciple of Christ is here *supposed* to have received the *Gift of the Holy Ghost*. For so *St Paul*, as in words equivalent to asking them whether they had been *baptized* or no, thus puts the Question to them, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* And *what* was then meant by *receiving the Holy Ghost*, appears from the following words, ver. 6. 'And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the 'Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with 'tongues and prophesied.' This was the immediate Effect of the Holy Ghost's *first* coming upon the *Apostles* at Pentecost; And This was generally the Effect of its coming *afterward* upon *new Converts* at their Baptism. And when this miraculous Effect ceased, yet still the receiving of the Holy Ghost was as constant and as necessary as ever; because *Except a man be born of the Spirit*, as well as of *water*, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. 'Tis *Now* true, as well as it was *Then*, that 'if any man has not the Spirit of

‘Christ, he is none of his ; and *that* the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in us, except we be reprobates.’

THE way to *know* whether any person *has* this Spirit dwelling in him, or *no* ; is by the *Fruits* of the Spirit ; For *the Tree is known by its Fruit*, Mat. xii. 33. Now the *Fruits* of the Spirit, are either *temporary* or *perpetual*. *Temporary* ; such as are the *miraculous Gifts of speaking with tongues, prophesying, healing diseases, and the like*. Or *Perpetual* ; such as are the *moral Dispositions and Habits of the Mind*, worked in us by the Spirit of God, improved in us by his continual *Assistance*, and acceptable to him in the *Performance* ; Namely *goodness, righteousness, and Truth*, and St Paul reckons them up, Eph. v. 9 ; and more largely, Gal. v. 22. ‘The Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ These are the *permanent Fruits* of the Spirit, necessary to be found *at all times* in every baptized person ; Otherwise his Baptism is nothing else, but merely the washing away the Filth of the Flesh ; so that, being born of *Water* only, and not of the Spirit, *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. In whomsoever these *moral Fruits* of the Spirit are found, the other *miraculous and extraordinary* ones are *Now* unnecessary ; And even *Then*, at the first preaching of the Gospel, when they were the *most needful* of all, yet were they useless and unprofitable to those very persons in whom they most abounded, if the *moral Fruits* of the Spirit were not found in conjunction with them. By the Habits of Piety and true Holiness, men may *Now* show themselves as full of the Holy Ghost as ever, *without* any miraculous Gifts ; *with* the greatest abundance of which, they were still void of the Holy Ghost even *Then*, if not indued with piety and true

true Holiness. For, *miraculous Gifts*, were but *Signs* of the Holy Spirit working *by* them, not *in* and *upon* them. And therefore such Gifts were useful, rather to *Others* than *themselves*; to convince *beholders*, rather than to sanctify the *persons*: *Tongues*, saith St Paul, 'are for a Sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.' But *moral Virtues*, are Evidences of the Spirit's dwelling *in* men, and *sanctifying* mens Hearts and Lives: Which *to themselves* is the *End* and the *Effect* of That *Belief*, the producing but the *first Beginnings* whereof in *Others*, is all that is intended by *miraculous Gifts*. These extraordinary Gifts therefore, were only *Operations* of the Spirit; But Righteousness and Holiness are properly called its *Fruits*. *Fruits of the Spirit*; because worked, not as the others, extrinsically, necessarily, and without the concurrence of the persons themselves; but worked *in* the mind, and *with* the free choice and *Will* of the person, by the *approbation*, *assistance*, and *help* of the Spirit of God, *concurring with him*, not barely operating *by* him. For which reason, *These* are never found but in *Good* men; being indeed the Qualifications which *denominate* men such: But the *Others* were often bestowed even upon *hypocritical* persons; whom our Saviour, though they had done in his Name many wonderful Works, yet declares he will reject from him, as being at the same time *Workers* of iniquity. And hence it is, that our Lord makes that remarkable Distinction, St Luke x. 20. 'In This rejoice not, that the Spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your Names are written in Heaven:' That is, 'tis a thing much more valuable, to be a good man, than to be able to cast out Devils. Hence also it is, that St Paul gives so manifest a preference to works of righteousness, before *miraculous Gifts*, 1 Cor.

xii. 30 ; ' Have All the gifts of healing ? do All speak
 ' with tongues ? do All interpret ? But covet earnestly
 ' the best Gifts, and yet show I unto you a *more excel-*
 ' *lent way ;* ' a way *yet more excellent*, even than the
best Gifts. And what *That* is, he tells us in the next
 words ; ' Though I speak with the Tongues of Men
 ' and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become
 ' as sounding brass or a tinkling Cymbal : And tho' I
 ' have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all myste-
 ' ries and all knowledge ; and tho' I have all Faith,
 ' so that I could remove mountains, and have no Cha-
 ' rity, I am nothing.' If I have no Charity ; that is,
 if I am not indued with a Spirit of Universal Love and
 Goodness towards Men. For so it is remarkable in the
 whole New Testament, that the word *Charity* never
 signifies, as it does Now in common speech, the mere
giving of Alms to the poor ; but it always means, in a
 larger Signification, That *Love and Desire of doing good to*
all men, which is opposed to uncharitableness, Peevish-
 ness, Hatred, Animosity and Factiousness. As is particu-
 larly evident in the Verse next following ; where *Charity*
 is expressly distinguished from *giving Alms to the poor*, as
 the *whole* of a Duty from its *part* ; ' Though I give
 ' (*saith he*) my body to be burned, and though I bestow
 ' all my goods to feed the poor, and have not Charity,'
 (that is, have not an universally good and righteous
 Spirit,) ' it profiteth me nothing.'

3dly, From the character of the persons described in
 the Text, we may observe that those words, *we have*
not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost,
 cannot possibly be a right translation ; but that they
 ought to have been rendred thus, *we have not so much*
as heard whether there be any Giving of the Holy Ghost ;
any such Gift or Distribution of it, as the Apostle in-
 quired

quired after. (There is a like expression, *John* vii. 39. *The Holy Ghost was not yet* ; so 'tis in the original ; which in the Translation we very rightly express, *The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*) Now of *This* indeed, of the extraordinary Gifts and miraculous Effusion of the Holy Ghost, the persons mentioned in the Text might in their present circumstances be ignorant : But, whether there be any Holy Ghost, This is what they could not possibly make a Question of. For, not to say that even the *Gentiles themselves* were not without Some Notion of a divine Afflatus, 'tis well known that the *Jews* had in the Writings of the Prophets perpetual mention of the Spirit of God : And therefore the Persons in the Text, who were of all other Jews or Profelytes the best instructed, as having been baptized with *John's* Baptism, 'tis plain could not possibly be ignorant of *That*, however they might not yet have heard of the extraordinary and miraculous Effusion of it since the Ascension of Christ.

4thly, FROM the manner of the Apostles putting the Question, *Unto What then were ye baptized ?* unto what, if not unto the expectation of the Gift of the Holy Ghost ? from This manner of the Apostle's putting the Question, it appears, that the following words, ver. 5. *when they heard This, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus* ; and the like Expressions in other parts of this book, ch. viii. 16. *they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus* ; and ch. ii. 38. *be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ* ; and ch. x. 48. *he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord* ; it appears (I say) that these Expressions do by no means signify, as if any one was ever baptized barely into the Name of Christ ; but on the contrary,

trary, that they are an abbreviate way of speaking, (such as is every where very usual in matters supposed to be already perfectly well known,) to put the *part* for the *whole*. Baptizing into *Jesus Christ*, was well known by all Christians, to signify baptizing in *That Form*, which our Lord *Jesus Christ* had appointed ; that is, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : And where-ever *part* of this Form is express'd, the *whole* is always understood to be implied. Had it been usual, according to the *Letter* of these expressions, to baptize men into the Name of *Christ* only ; the Apostle could not properly have asked those who had not yet heard of the Gift of the *Holy Ghost*, *unto what then were ye Baptized ?* but his question should have been, *after what manner have ye been instructed ?* But putting the Question in the manner he does ; *if ye are ignorant of the Gift of the Holy Ghost, unto what then were ye baptized ?* shows plainly, that not only in the doctrinal instruction of a Christian, but also in the *Baptism* itself, there must have been mention of the *Holy Ghost*, notwithstanding that abbreviate manner of speaking, wherein they are said only to *have been in the Name of the Lord Jesus*, in contra-distinction to *John's Baptism*. And from hence also it appears further, *what* was then understood by those words in the form of Baptism, *And of the Holy Ghost*, or in the *Name of the Holy Ghost* : Namely, that the person, as he was baptized into the Knowledge of *God*, and into the Death of *Christ* ; so he was baptized also into the Expectation of the Gifts of the *Holy Ghost* ; whether those Gifts were *extraordinary*, as the miraculous Powers conferred at that particular Time ; or *ordinary*, as the Sanctification of mens Hearts for ever.

Lastly,

Lastly, FROM the History in the Text, we may learn the difference between the Baptism of John and that of Christ, how they were Both really but One thing, the former being imperfect without the latter, and the latter perfecting only what the former had begun, and therefore not being called a Rebaptizing. When the Disciples, to the question, Unto what then were ye baptized? made this Answer, Unto John's Baptism; The Apostle replies, ver. 4. John verily baptized with the Baptism of Repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus: And when they heard This, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them. John baptized into the Expectation only, of Him that was to come after; And therefore This his Baptism was imperfect, till the intention of it was fulfilled by the same persons being afterwards baptized into the Name of Christ when he was come, and receiving actually his Gifts, of which the Former Baptism was but declaring a preparatory Expectation. And This is what is set forth in those Texts, where John the Baptist expressly acknowledges and declares, 'I indeed, (saith he) baptize you with Water unto Repentance; but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire,' Matt. iii. 11. Mar. i. 7, 8. Luke iii. 16, 17. Acts i. 5. and xi. 16. With the Holy Ghost and with Fire; that is, with the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, both ordinary and extraordinary: Which was literally fulfilled upon the Apostles at Pentecost; and, in the virtual Effect, upon all the other Disciples who were baptized afterwards. And again: John bare record, saying, John i. 31, 32. that

that He [*viz.* that Christ] should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing [only] with Water : According to the Account the Angel prophetically gave before of his Office, Luke i. 16. ‘ Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God ; and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the Fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ These are the *particular* Observations I thought useful to draw from the History in the Text : It remains that we consider in the next place the *general* doctrine concerning the Nature and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which was the Foundation and Occasion of the *particular* Incidents referred to in the Text.

S E R M O N

SERMON III.

Of receiving the *Holy Ghost*.

[*Preached on Whitsunday.*]

ACTS xix. 2, 3.

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized?

IN a former Discourse upon these Words, I have in-
deavoured briefly to explain the meaning, of the
several *particular* expressions here made use of by
the Apostle, and by the new Converts with whom he
discoursed. It remains at this time, according to the
Method proposd, that I proceed in the next place to
consider the *general* doctrine, concerning the *Nature*
and *Gifts* of the Holy Spirit, which was the Founda-
tion and Occasion of the *particular* Incidents referred to
in the Text. And

I. WHEN

I. WHEN *John the Baptist* came preaching and baptizing with Water ; with whose Baptism *only*, the Disciples in the Text having been baptized, had neither received the Gift of the Holy Ghost *themselves*, nor so much as *heard* of its miraculous Gifts being bestowed on *others* ; he modestly and plainly confessed, *Matt. iii. 11.* ‘ I indeed baptize you with Water unto Repentance ; but He that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose Shoes I am not worthy to bear ; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire.’ According to This Declaration of *John the Baptist*, our Saviour, a little before his Ascension, promised his Disciples, *Acts. i. 5.* ‘ John truly baptized with Water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.’ And This his Promise was effectually made good to them, in that miraculous Effusion of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which we this day commemorate, and which is particularly described in the second chapter of the *Acts*. Where that *Circumstance* of *there appearing* unto the Apostles *cloven tongues, like as of Fire*, ver. 3. explains the meaning of that prophetic Phrase used by *John the Baptist* concerning our Lord, *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire* ; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, descending at first *visibly* in the appearance of *Fire* ; and continuing with you afterwards, in pursuance of what That emblem represented, by an Assistance as much more powerful and efficacious than what *John Baptist* pretended to, as *Fire* is more powerful and more purifying than Water. To the Apostles and first Disciples, who were to spread the Gospel over the World, this their being baptized with the Holy Ghost, was accompanied with miraculous Gifts and Powers ; such as speaking with tongues, healing diseases, and the like ;

like : But when the reason of these miraculous operations ceased, yet *still* every Christian is baptized with the *Holy Ghost* as well as with *Water* ; and his *internal* sanctifying Gifts and Graces, are to continue with us always even unto the end of the World. If any one has not received *these* Gifts of the Holy Ghost, it may still be asked him with the same propriety as in the Text, *Unto what then were ye baptized ?* If any man has not in him the Spirit of Christ ; if he does not show forth in his Life the Fruits of the Spirit, by Works of Righteousness and true Piety ; if his Heart be not sanctified by this Spirit of Holiness ; if his Mind improves not, and delights not in things spiritual ; if his Will obeys not the good Motions of this Divine Assister ; if the Actions of his Life are not guided by the Commands of God, revealed to us in Scripture by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost ; *to what purpose then was such a Person baptized ?*

It may here perhaps be inquired, *Does not the Spirit of God distribute to every man severally as he himself willet* ? *Does not the wind blow where it listeth, and so* (saith our Saviour) *is every one that is born of the Spirit ?* Are we not justified freely by God's grace ? And does not the Apostle accordingly require us humbly to acknowledge, *Who maketh thee to differ from another ?* How then can it be objected to any man as a *Fault*, or as a *Defect* in himself, that he has not received the Holy Ghost, or that he is not indued with those Gifts and Graces, which are not his own acquirements, but free distributions of the Spirit of God ? To give a clear and satisfactory Answer to this Difficulty, it is necessary that we attend to the following Distinction.

SOME Gifts of the Spirit are mere external miraculous Powers ; such as speaking with Tongues, healing

diseases, and the like: And of these it is, that the Apostle declares, that the Spirit *so* divides to every man severally as he willeth, and *so* maketh One to differ from another, that nothing at all of these kinds of Gifts depends in any measure upon the Will of the Persons themselves. And therefore as by *having* these Gifts, no man was the better Christian; so no man by *wanting* them, was the worse; these Gifts being bestowed, not for the Benefit of the *Persons themselves*, but for the Conversion of *Others*.

OTHER Gifts of the Spirit, are particular Powers and *Qualifications* for particular *Offices*; Of which the Apostle speaks, *Ephes.* iv. 7, 11. 'To every one of us' is given grace (*or* a gift,) according to the measure of 'the Gift of Christ; *who* gave some Apostles, and 'some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for 'the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body 'of Christ.' And with respect to *These*, the Goodness of a Christian did not consist in his having *This* or *That* particular Gift, but in making a right *Use* of his Talent, whatever it was. *Rom.* xii. 3. 'Twas God *that dealt to every man the measure of Faith*; that is, (as it appears from the words immediately following;) God, according to his own good pleasure, distributed to each one a *particular Trust* or Employment; That is in this place the meaning of the *Measure of Faith*; 'Tis a *Trust* committed to each one's *Fidelity* or *Faithfulness*. *Having therefore Gifts* (adds the Apostle, ver. 6.) 'differing according to the grace that is given to us; 'whether it be prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of Faith,' (according to the proportion of the *Gift entrusted* to our *Fidelity*; so the words properly signify;) 'Or if it be Ministry, let us wait

‘ wait on our ministring ; or he that teacheth, on teaching ; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation ; He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity, (*that is, liberally*) ; he that ruleth, with diligence ; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.’

AGAIN : *Other Gifts of the Spirit, are particular and personal Advantagious Circumstances* in the peculiar Constitution of Mens Bodies, the natural Frame and Temper of their Mind, or their external State of Life and condition in the World ; by which they are peculiarly fitted for the Exercise of some particular Offices, or for the continuing in some particular Manner and Course of Life. Of *These* the Apostle speaks 1 Cor. vii. 7. ‘ I would, says he, that all men were even as I myself ; But every man hath his proper gift of God, (*a natural Qualification or Fitness for certain particular Duties or States of Life,*) one after This manner, and another after That.’ And, with respect to *These*, the goodness of a Christian does not consist in his being indued with *This* or *That* particular Qualification ; but in his behaving himself suitably to *These* Qualifications wherewith God has indued him.

LASTLY, *Other* (and indeed the *Principal*) Gifts or Fruits of the Spirit, are *moral Virtues* ; Righteousness, Peace, Goodness, Meekness, Temperance, and the like. And in *These* lies the only difficulty of the Question. If they be Fruits of the Spirit, and worked in us by the Power of the Grace of God ; how then can it be objected to any man as a Fault or as a Defect in himself, that he has not Thus received the Holy Ghost. The True Answer is ; that these *moral* Graces, are not, like those others before-mentioned, worked on men necessarily by an external operation, but depend on the indeavours of their own Will, at

the same time that they are promoted by the Assistance of the *Holy Spirit*. Every person that embraces the Gospel and is baptized, has received the Promise of the Holy Ghost ; and 'tis wholly his own Fault, and his own Wickedness only, if, with That Assistance, he brings not forth the Fruits of the Spirit. The Assistance of the Spirit, is indeed necessary to *inable men* to bring forth Fruits meet for the Kingdom of God ; But then, because 'tis the *Assistance* only, and not (like the miraculous operations) the *entire Work* of the Spirit ; and because That Assistance is always afforded men in proportion to the sincere endeavours of their *own Will* co-operating ; therefore 'tis justly charged upon a man as his own Fault, if he wants those Virtues and Graces of the Spirit, which, were it not for his own wilful rejecting its good Motions, the good Spirit of God would never be wanting in assisting him to practise. 'Examine yourselves (*saieth* ' *St Paul*) whether ye be in the Faith : Prove your ' own selves : know ye not your own selves, how that ' Jesus Christ is in you,' (or, as it is elsewhere expressed, ' the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in you,) except ' ye be reprobates, that is, except by your own perverse wickedness ye drive him from you, *2 Cor. xiii. 5.* And for this reason (I suppose) it is, that whereas the *miraculous* operations, are generally in Scripture stiled the *Gifts* of the Spirit ; the *moral* Virtues are on the contrary called, not the *Gifts*, but much more usually the *Fruits* of the Spirit. *Fruits* ; to the production of which, it is as necessarily requisite, that there be *good ground* in which the root is planted ; as that the *root* be good, which is planted in that ground. 'Tis as necessary in order to bringing forth the *Fruits* of the Spirit, that the Will and good Disposition of the

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the Person himself, concur with the good Motions of the Spirit ; as 'tis necessary that the Spirit affords his Assistance, to enable the person effectually to fulfil his own good dispositions. Our Saviour has illustrated This to us, in the Parable of the Sower ; where the Fruit brought forth in several places, is represented exactly proportionable to the Goodness of the Ground. The Seed sown, is the Word of God ; and the Rain which caused it to grow, is the Assistance of the divine Spirit. Now though without Seed sown in the Earth, and without Rain from Heaven, no Fruit indeed could have been produced : yet to the Badness of the *ground* only, is all the Failure justly ascribed in this Parable by our Lord, because the other Necessaries were supplied from above. In like manner, though Christian Virtues are indeed the Fruits of the Spirit, and could not, without the Assistance of the divine Spirit, be acceptably and effectually produced ; yet because This Assistance from above is never wanting but thro' our own unworthiness, therefore most justly is every wicked person blamed and punished, for being void of those Virtues, which are the Fruits of the Spirit. The same thing is expressed to us in the Parable of the Vine-yard, *Is. v. 2* ; where God complains by the Prophet concerning the people of the *Jews* whom he compares to a *vine-yard* ; that he had ' fenced it, and gathered out the Stones thereof, and ' planted it with the choicest Vine ; and he looked ' that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth ' wild-grapes.' The planting and dressing the Vineyard was necessary to its bringing forth good Grapes ; but when it failed to do so, the Fault was in the Vineyard itself, ver. 4. ' What could have been done more ' to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ? Where-

‘fore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, ‘brought it forth wild grapes?’ God does, on *his* part, always what is necessary for our Assistance; and no more denies his Holy Spirit to such as worthily ask him, than a tender Father, *if his Son asks an Egg, will give him a Scorpion*, Luk. xi. 12. But men by their own unworthiness, and resisting his good Motions, do quench and grieve and drive him from them; and then most justly is it charged upon them as their *own Fault*, if they have not in them the Spirit of God, which yet at the same time is God’s *free Gift* when bestowed at all. *Free*; because originally God had no obligation, but his own mere Goodness, to confer it on *any*; and yet nevertheless ‘tis every man’s *own Fault*, if he receives it not; because God never withholds this his Free Gift, but from Those only who are not sincerely willing to co-operate with it; in bringing forth those Fruits of Righteousness and true Holiness, which, upon account of That concurrence, are, at the same time, both the *Virtues* of the *Man*, and the *Fruits* of the *Spirit*. When therefore the Scripture affirms that we are *justified freely by his Grace*; the meaning is not, that the Grace of God operates upon Men as Machines; and that *he* so acts upon them, as to make needless their acting for *themselves*. But the intention of the Phrase is to declare, that ‘tis owing to the free Grace, or undeserved Favour of God, made known in the Gospel; that the imperfect Fruits of Righteousness which by our best indeavours we are able to bring forth, are *accepted* of him unto justification; and that the *Assistance* of the good Spirit of God is always at hand, to strengthen and enable us to bring forth those Fruits. In like manner, when our Saviour declares, that ‘the Wind bloweth where it
‘listeth,

‘ listeth, and we hear the Sound thereof, but know
 ‘ not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth ; and
 ‘ *that* so is every one that is born of the Spirit ;’ the
 meaning is not, that the Spirit regenerates men with-
 out any care or co-operation of their own ; (for That
 would make all the Exhortations of the Gospel vain
 and absurd ;) but the Intent of the passage is, that
 the *Manner* and *Degrees*, by which the Grace of the
 Gospel enables a man to reform the whole moral Frame
 and Temper of his Mind, are as imperceptible to Sense,
 as the secret Causes of many great Effects and Opera-
 tions in Nature. That Regeneration is owing to the
 Assistance of the *Holy Ghost*, our Saviour plainly shows
 in this argument, both by the similitude itself, and by
 expressly calling it our being *born of the Spirit* ; Yet
 that at the same time it depends upon the man’s own
 Will, whether that divine Assistance shall take effect
 in him ; he no less plainly declares in the very same
 discourse, by requiring it of *Us* as an indispensable Du-
 ty, that we *be born of the Spirit* : Except a man, saith
 he, *be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter
 into the Kingdom of God*. From hence we may under-
 stand how it comes to pass, that usually in Scripture-
 Phrase, both all the good that *men do* is ascribed to
 God, and all the good that *God works in them* is still
 nevertheless ascribed to *themselves*. ’Tis God that *work-
 eth in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure* ;
 And yet in the very same verse we are commanded to
work out our own Salvation ourselves ; nay, we are
 commanded to do it for that very reason, because God
 has given us the Power both of Willing and perform-
 ing it. As every man is tempted, when he is drawn
 away of his own Lust, and enticed ; and yet at the
 same time all Sin is ascribed to the Temptations of the
 Devil,

44 *Of receiving the Holy Ghost.*

Devil, because the Devil is the Head of *Apoflacy*, and delights in the Sins of Men, and lays before them opportunities of being enticed and drawn away by their own Lust and Wickedness, without which he could otherwise have no Power over them; so, because *God* is the original Author of all good, and the Giver of all the Powers by which we *do* good, and *incourages* and *affists* us in the performance of it; therefore most justly in Scripture is all the good we do, ascribed to *Him*; and yet, because without our own Care and concurrence to put them in *Action*, all these *Powers* and *Assistances* are in vain; 'tis therefore very reasonably urged as a *Duty* incumbent upon *Ourselves*, to *grow in grace*, 2 Pet. iii. 18; and it is required of us by an indispensable Obligation, that *We* bring forth the *Fruits of the Spirit*. And This is implied to us in the very Form of Baptism: For when we are baptized in the *Name* of the *Holy Ghost*, into *what* is it that we are so baptized, but into the *expectation* of the *Assistance* of the Holy Spirit, and into a solemn *Promise* of submitting ourselves accordingly to his holy *Guidance and Direction*? As, being baptized in the *Name* of *the Father*, is declaring our *Assurance* of *Reconciliation* and *Return* to his Favour, who had been justly offended with us; and a solemn *Dedication* of ourselves to His Service for the future, as the One supreme Governor and Lord of the Universe: And being baptized in the *Name* of *the Son*, is being baptized into the *Remission* of Sins by his Blood, and into a solemn *Obligation*, on our own part, of dying with him unto Sin, and rising again unto Newness of Life: So, being baptized in the *Name* of *the Holy Ghost*, is at the same time a solemn Declaration both of our *Hoping* for his Guidance, and of our *Resolving* to obey it.

2. I HAVE been the longer upon This *first* Head concerning the *Gifts* of the Spirit, because it is a Doctrine of the Highest Importance to us, and of great Moment in Practice. That which remains in the 2d place, concerning the *Nature and Offices* of the Holy Spirit, being more speculative, I shall explain very briefly in few words. * As to the proper *Nature* of this divine Spirit, the Vanity and Pride of learned men has often confounded their Understandings, while they have presumed to be wise above what is written, intruding into things which they have not seen, and attempting to explain what God has not revealed. The Essence and inmost Nature of the smallest *Body*, we cannot fully understand: The Life of the meanest *Animal*, is beyond all our Philosophy to explain: The Nature of the *Soul of Man*, is still a more unsearchable Mystery; The Nature and essence of *Angels*, is yet far more unfathomable than any of These: How then should vain man presume to search out the Nature of the *Spirit* of God? the Nature of the *only begotten Son* of God? the Nature of the *Father* himself, the incomprehensible God and Father of all things? What the Scripture expressly declares to us, is all we can ever know concerning these Matters; and This the meanest Christian is as capable of understanding, as the learnedest Disputers in the World. Concerning the *Nature of the Holy Spirit* therefore, That which the Scripture teaches us, is *This* only; that He is a Divine Person, in an ineffable manner deriving his Being, proceeding from, or being sent forth from, the Father; *whereby* he is, and *upon which account* he is stiled, in a singular and peculiar manner, *The Spirit of God*. And because after the Ascension of Christ, the Gifts distributed by the same Spirit,

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rit, were, according to the Promise of the Father, poured forth in *much greater plenty and abundance* than before ; therefore he is frequently stiled likewise, *The Spirit of Christ* : And before that *Jesus* was glorified, 'tis affirmed therefore of the same Spirit in the Gospel, (comparatively to that *much larger Effusion* which was to follow after,) that he *was not yet given* at all, St *Joh.* vii. 39 ; In which Passage 'tis very remarkable, that the words in the original are, *The Holy Ghost was not yet* ; meaning, was not yet given ; just as in the Text the Disciples are said *not to have heard whether there was any Holy Ghost* ; meaning, that they had not heard whether he was yet given. There have been *Some*, both in Antient and Modern times, who have taught that the *Holy Ghost* was nothing but a mere Power, and Operation or Action of the Father : But tho' it is True, that Powers are indeed sometimes in Scripture, according to the nature of the *Jewish* language, spoken of figuratively as Persons ; yet in the present case 'tis plain on the contrary, that the Person of the Holy Spirit is often represented and spoken of as the Power of the Father, only because By Him it is that the Father works all Miracles and bestows all Gifts. Nor can those Texts be understood any otherwise, than of a real Person ; in which it is expressed that He, (in the original it is, *That Person*,) *the Spirit of Truth is come*, Joh. xvi. 13 ; that he *maketh intercession for us*, Rom. viii. 26 ; that he *divideth* spiritual Gifts, *to every one severally as he willeth*, 1 Cor. xii. 11 ; and that he *shall not speak of himself, but what he shall hear*, or receive from the Father, *That shall he speak*, Joh. xvi. 13. These, and other the like Texts, do plainly declare the Holy Spirit to be, not a mere Power or Operation, but a real Person

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sent forth from the Father and the Son, for the perpetual Government and Direction of the Church.

IN which Mission, the several *Offices* which the Scripture teaches us he performs, are as follows; that it was He who inspired the Prophets of old, to testify before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow : that he was afterwards sent forth in a more particular and extraordinary manner, to be the Comforter, Director, and Guide of the Apostles ; to lead them into all Truth ; to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever Christ had before said unto them ; to support them against the Power of the World ; to instruct them what to answer to their Persecutors ; to be the great Witness of our Saviour's Resurrection, by working Signs and Wonders and mighty Works, by inspiring the Apostles with the Gift of Tongues, and dividing to their Followers Diversities of Gifts ; Finally, to continue with all good Christians even unto the End of the World, as the great Sanctifier of the Hearts of Men ; sanctifying them, not by working upon them mechanically as Machines, but by moral Motives as rational Beings ; assisting them with his Grace, admonishing them with his Holy Influences, working with them and inspiring them with his good Gifts, and helping the infirmity of their Prayers with an energy that cannot be expressed.

3. HAVING thus briefly discoursed concerning the *Nature and Offices and Gifts* of the Spirit ; the *Application* of what has been said, is, what *Returns* we are bound to make for the Benefit of those Divine Gifts bestowed upon us. And 1st, it will become us to return continual and hearty Thanks to God, as the original Author and Fountain of all Good ; because it is He, who has thus given unto us His holy Spirit, 1 *Thess.*

iv. 8. and who has *sent forth* the Spirit of his Son into our Hearts, *Gal. iv. 6.* 2dly, As we are to return hearty Thanks for the Gifts already received, so we are continually to pray to God in the whole course of our Lives, that *This* his holy Spirit, into whose Name we were at first baptized, *i. e.* dedicated wholly to his Guidance and Direction in the work of our Salvation ; may never be withdrawn from us, but may continue to guide us by his perpetual influence, communion and fellowship. 3dly, With regard to the Holy Spirit himself, it becomes us to endeavour to frame right and worthy Notions concerning him ; that we acknowledge him to be the Inspirer of the Prophets and Apostles ; the Author and Worker of all Signs and Miracles ; the Sanctifier of all Hearts, and the Distributer of all spiritual Gifts : that we believe and receive his Testimony, as delivered by the Inspired Writers ; that we obey his good Motions ; be solicitous to obtain his gifts and graces ; and infinitely careful not to grieve and quench and drive him from us, lest we be found to do despite unto the Spirit of grace ; which in Scripture is represented as a more unpardonable fault, than offending against the Person even of our Saviour himself. *How is it* (says the Apostle,) *that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?* Acts v. 19. To tempt ; that is, in Scripture-language, to provoke him : In the day of Temptation in the wilderness, when your Fathers tempted me ; the meaning is, provoked me to anger, Ps. xciv. 9. Again, *Ephes. iv. 30.* ‘ And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the Day of Redemption :’ The word, *sealed*, is a figurative expression ; the meaning of which may be understood from *Rev. vii. 3.* *Hurt not the Earth,——’till we have sealed the Servants of our God in their fore-*
heads,

heads, i. e. distinguished them by a peculiar mark, in order to preserve them from a general destruction. In Allusion to which, good Christians are said to be sealed by the Spirit unto the day of Redemption ; i. e. distinguished by the Fruits of the Spirit, in order to be delivered from the Wrath to come. And in pursuance of this figure, is the like expression, 2 Cor. i. 22, *who hath also sealed us, and given the Earnest* (in the original it is, the Pledge or Token) *of the Spirit in our Hearts :* And, 2 Tim. ii. 19. *The Foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this Seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his, and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

THERE is one thing more upon this head, which deserves particular observation, wherewith I shall conclude : And That is, that following the Guidance of the Spirit, is not following Enthusiastick Imaginations ; but taking care to obey the doctrine which the Spirit inspired. The *Apostles* were directed by a miraculous Assistance of the Spirit, upon every particular occasion : But we have *Now* no promise of any such miraculous direction : Obeying the Spirit *Now*, is nothing else but obeying his dictates, as set down in the inspired Writings : And to inable us to do This, we *may*, upon our sincere indeavours, expect his continual blessing and assistance.

SERMON IV.

Of the Power and Authority of CHRIST.

[Preached on Trinity-Sunday.]

St M A T T. xxviii. part 18, 19, 20.

All power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth : Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always even unto the End of the World.

OUR Saviour in his last Discourse with his Disciples before his suffering ; after he had instituted the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and was going out with them toward the Mount of Olives in order to be betrayed ; and had warned them of their approaching Sorrow, ch. xxvi. 31. ' All ye shall be of-

‘fended because of Me this Night ; for it is written, I
 ‘will smite the Shepherd, and the Sheep of the Flock
 ‘shall be scattered abroad ;’ proceeds in the next verse
 to allay their Grief, and support them against Despair,
 by giving them a remote prospect of Light after Dark-
 ness, and of Comfort that should succeed That melan-
 choly Scene : *But after I am risen again, saith he, I*
will go before you into Galilee. What he intended to *Do*
in Galilee, he did not then think fit to explain to them
 more distinctly ; But *Galilee* being the place wherein they
 had used to converse most freely with him, and where
 they had with pleasure heard the greatest part of his
 divine Discourses ; it gave them a general Hope or Ex-
 pectation, that after the present Time of Trouble,
 and after their leaving *Jerusalem* the constant place of
 Persecution ; when he should be risen again, (the *mean-*
ing of which, whether it was literal or only figurative,
 they seemed not then fully to understand ; but when it
 were fulfilled,) they thought they should again con-
 verse with him freely and safely, in their antient places
 of retirement in *Galilee*.

AFTER his Resurrection, This Promise was renewed
 and confirmed to them, by the Angel appearing to the
 Women at the Sepulchre, and saying, *Mar. xvi. 7.*
 ‘Go, — tell his Disciples, — that he goeth before
 ‘you into *Galilee* ; there shall ye see him, as he said
 ‘unto you.’ And the *Fulfilling* of it, is recorded in
 the words immediately before the Text ; ‘Then the
 ‘eleven Disciples went away into *Galilee*, into a Moun-
 ‘tain where Jesus had appointed them ; And *there* they
 ‘saw him, — and *he* spake unto them.’ What it was
 that he spake unto them ; or what the Design was,
 of his meeting them there ; St *Luke* tells us, *Acts i. 2.*
 ‘He gave Commandments unto the Apostles whom he
 ‘had

' had chosen, and spake to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God ;' He gave them full instructions concerning the Nature of his spiritual Kingdom, which before his Resurrection they did not rightly understand ; and, in several Conversations during the forty days between his Resurrection and Ascension, he furnished them with all proper Directions relating to the Doctrine of the Gospel, which they were to preach and propagate over the whole World. A Summary or short Abridgment of which Instructions, is delivered down to us in the Words of the Text: ' All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth : Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World.'

THE words contain in brief, the whole System of Christian Doctrine : And, for Method's sake, we may observe in them distinctly the following particulars ; 1st, *An Account of the Extent, of our Saviour's Power ;* that he is invested with All Power, both in Heaven and Earth. 2^{dly}, *A Declaration, of the Original of that unlimited Power and Authority ;* All Power, saith he, is given me, i. e. from the Father. 3^{dly}, *The Commission he thereupon grants his Disciples ;* Go Ye therefore, and teach all Nations ; 4^{thly}, *The Doctrine,* which all Nations were to be taught, and into which they were to be baptized ; *Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* 5^{thly}, *The Practice,* of those who were to be baptized into this Faith ; *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ;* And Lastly, *The Promise of effectual Assistance,* to the Disciples sent forth

upon This Commission ; *And lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World.*

1st, HERE is an Account, of the *Extent* of our Saviour's Power and Authority ; that he is invested with *All Power*, both in *Heaven and Earth*. The *Jews*, in their expectations of the Messiah, imagined to themselves the Character of a Temporal Prince, who should deliver them from the Yoke of their Enemies, and reduce all the World under their Dominion ; who should *subdue the People under them, and the Nations under their Feet* : who should *choose out an Heritage for them, even the Excellency of Jacob whom he loved*, Ps. *xlvi. 3.* And *This* indeed our Saviour *has begun*, and will continue to accomplish ; according to the *True Intent* of the Prophecy, tho' not after the manner of *Their Interpretation*. *Unto Them*, tho' they know it not, a *Child is born* ; *unto Them*, a *Son is given* ; and the government *Is upon his Shoulder* ; and his Name *Is Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God* ; (Is. *ix. 6.*) (Not, the everlasting Father ; For 'tis the Son here spoken of, and not the Father everlasting ; But) the Governor, the Father or Lord of the Age to come, (so the Phrase ought to be rendered ;) *The Prince of Peace* : *And he shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end.* (Luk. *i. 33.*) The *Jews*, at the time of our Lord's appearing in the *Flesh* were extremely disappointed and prejudiced against him ; because his *seeming meanness* fell so much short of that *Grandour*, wherein they expected their Messiah should have shown himself : And yet in reality his *True Power and Authority* was as much *Superiour* even to that *expected Grandour* ; as his *seeming Meanness*, for which they despised him, was *inferiour* to it. They expected a *Temporal Deliverer*, and he proposed to them a *Salva-*
tion

tion eternal : They looked for a Prince of *Men*, and he appeared to be the Lord of *Angels* : They expected a Messiah indued with *great* Power on *Earth*, and he showed himself to be invested with *All* Power both in *Earth and Heaven*. Thus did the Wisdom of God put to silence the ignorance of foolish men ; and while the Lovers of Worldly Grandour despised and reviled our Lord for his appearing Meanness ; under that Meanness there lay concealed, and to all well-disposed Persons (who looked for Redemption in *Israel*) there discovered itself a Power, infinitely superiour even to the highest Expectations, of those whose Hearts were bent on nothing but Worldly Greatness. *O the depth of the Riches both of the Knowledge and Wisdom of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !* Our Saviour, as he ministred to the Father in creating the *World* ; (For by Him, the Scripture declares, *God created all things*;) So in governing the *World*, he likewise supports all things by the *Word of his Power*. He does what he pleases, in the *Armies of Heaven*, and among the *Inhabitants of the Earth* ; He is *King of Kings*, and *Lord of Lords* ; and judges, punishes, or rewards, as he pleases : *For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickneth them ; even so the Son quickneth whom he willeth*, St Joh. v. 21. *He searcheth the Hearts and Reins, and declares that he will give to every man according to his Work*, Rev. ii. 23. *He hath the Keys of Hell and of Death*, Rev. i. 18. *the Key of David, that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth*, Rev. iii. 7. The Words are of the same import with those in *Job*, ch. xii. 14. where complete and irresistible Power is thus described ; *Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again ; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening : And they*

they are an Application of that antient Prophecy, to our Saviour ; *Is. xxii. 22. The Key of the House of David will I lay upon his shoulder ; so he shall open, and none shall shut ; and he shall shut, and none shall open.*

AND This, as it is a full Declaration of the Extent of our Saviour's Power, that it is *universal*, All Power both in *Heaven and Earth* ; which was the 1st particular observable in the Text ; so it leads us in the 2^d place, to the consideration of the *Original* of this unlimited Power and Authority. *I will lay upon his shoulder the Key of the House of David.* I will invest him with *All Power*, saith God in the Prophecy ; And, at the Accomplishment of the Prophecy, All Power is *Given unto me*, saith our Saviour in the Text ; i. e. given unto me by the Father. Underived Power, is peculiar to the Person of the Father ; the incommunicable Property of Him alone, *who is made of None, neither created, nor begotten, nor proceeding*, nor in any manner whatsoever derived from Another. All Power is derivative from Him ; derivative from the Father, to the Son ; and from the Son, by the Spirit, to all Creatures. In our Saviour therefore, is vested all Dominion and Authority ; because *in Him dwelleth the Fulness of the Godhead*, (the Fulness of Divine Power, the Glory of the Father,) bodily, *visibly*, as in the Person of a Man : And therefore he is stiled, *the Image of the invisible God* ; because (as the Apostle expresses it,) *it pleased the Father, that in him should all Fulness, the Fulness of all Power, dwell.* This is, in a most lively Figure, represented to us by the Prophet Daniel, ch. vii. 13. *I saw in the Night-visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Antient of Days, and they brought him near before him ; And there was given him Dominion,*

and Glory, and a Kingdom; that all people, nations and languages should serve him; His Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, which shall not pass away; and his Kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed. And the Expressions in the New Testament, wherein is recorded the Fulfilling of this Prophetick Vision, are exactly agreeable to it. The Angel at the Annunciation, thus declares concerning him, before his Conception, *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the Throne of his Father David; and he shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever*, Luk. i. 32. Concerning Himself he professes accordingly, *Matt. xi. 27. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: And again, Job. xiii. 3. Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands: And yet more expressly, Job. v. 22. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; and ver. 26, As the Father hath Life in Himself, so hath he given to the Son to have Life in Himself; And hath given him Authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man; and ver. 19, Verily I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doth, these also doth the Son likewise.* In the same manner with these declarations of our Lord concerning himself, do the Apostles also speak of Him in their Epistles. *Whom God hath appointed Heir of all things*, saith St Paul, *Heb. i. 2; and ch. ii. 8, Thou hast put all things in Subjection under his Feet.* And still more largely and particularly, *Phil. ii. 9; Wherefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name; that at the Name of Jesus every Knee shall bow, (should become subject to His Dominion,) of things in Heaven, and things*

things in Earth, and things under the Earth ; And that every tongue should confess (in acknowledgment of That Subjection,) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ; and Eph. i. 20, he raised Christ from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places ; Far above all principalities and Powers, and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come ; And hath put all things under his Feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the Church. And accordingly upon account of this derivation of our Lord's Power, by way of Delegation from the Father, it is, that the same Apostle declares, 1 Cor. xv. 24. that at the End, he shall deliver up again the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all Rule and all Authority and Power : For—when he saith, All things are put under him, 'tis manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under him : And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God (even the Father) may be all in all. It may here justly be thought a Difficulty, how in This place it is declared, that our Lord shall at the End deliver up the Kingdom to the Father ; and yet in other Passages before-mentioned it is expressly affirmed, that he shall rule for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no End. But the answer is obvious ; that, when 'tis said, his Kingdom shall have no End, and that 'tis a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed ; the meaning is, that it shall never be prevailed over by any opposite Power, but shall subdue all things to itself ; In which Subjection of all things to him, 'tis yet manifest that He cannot be included, by whose original Power they were All made subject to him : (1 Cor. xv. 27.) But as our Lord was
at

at first sent forth by the good Pleasure of the Father, so unto Him shall he at last return again; and when, by the Power of Judgment committed unto him, he shall have brought many Sons unto glory, he shall, together with *Them*, deliver up again the *Power itself* also into the hands of the Father, when he presents them *faultless before the presence of his glory*, and institutes them in the eternal Kingdom of their heavenly Father: In which Kingdom of the Father, He himself shall continue to reign over them that are saved, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, for ever and ever. The Socinian Writers, from these and some other the like Texts of Scripture, have very unreasonably presumed to collect, that our Saviour was no greater a Person than a mere Man, born of the Virgin *Mary* without any former Existence, and exalted by the Power of God to this State of Dignity in Heaven: But This their Inference (I say) is very unreasonable: For tho' the Derivation of our Lord's Power from the Father, must and ought to be acknowledged; that all mens confessing *Jesus to be Lord*, may be (as St Paul directs) *to the glory of God the Father*; yet from those other Texts of Scripture, wherein 'tis affirmed that *by Christ God created all things*; that he was in the *Form of God*, before he appeared in the *Form of a Servant*; that he *was with God*, and *had Glory with God before the World was*; from these Texts, I say, it undeniably appears, that our Lord's having all Power given him both in Heaven and Earth, cannot signify the original Exaltation, of One who had no Being before he was born of the Virgin; but the Exaltation of *Him* into the Form of God, who voluntarily emptied himself of that Glory he had before, and with unparalleled Humility took upon himself the Form of a Servant, and suffered in that

that Form for our Sakes, and *Therefore* was worthy to receive Power and Riches and Wisdom, and strength and honour, and glory and blessing, because he was slain, and redeemed us to God by his own Blood, out of every Tongue and Kindred and people and Nation. (Rev. v. ver. 9 and 12.)

3dly, THE next thing observable in the Text, is the Commission our Saviour grants his Disciples, upon his having received all Power in Heaven and Earth; Go Ye therefore, and Teach all Nations. The Word, therefore, is the Ascertaining of *Their* Authority, from the Security of his *own*. All Power is given unto *Me*; Go Ye therefore, and teach all Nations. This particular is more fully expressed by St *John*, ch. xx. 21. *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you:—whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained*: Not that the Apostles were intrusted with any Power, to pardon or condemn any man according to their *own* Pleasure: For *This* even our Saviour *himself*, does only according to the Will of the Father which sent him: But the meaning is, that they were intrusted to preach *That* Doctrine of Repentance, by the Terms of which it was to be determined, *whose* Sins should be pardoned and *whose* retained. A like Expression is used by our Saviour to St *Peter*, Matt. xvi. 19, *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven*: Not that St *Peter*, or Any, or All the Apostles, had Power to let whom they pleased into Heaven; but that they were appointed and commissioned to preach *That* Doctrine, by the Terms of which, Men were to be admitted into, or excluded out of Heaven.

Go ye, and Teach all Nations: The Word, *Teach*, signifies in the original, *Make Disciples*: In like manner, as *Acts* xiv. 21, *When they had preached the Gospel to that City, and had Taught many*; in the original it is, *and had made many Disciples*.

TEACH, All Nations: The words, *All Nations*, signify primarily, the Nations of the Roman Empire; and then, in a larger Sense, all the Kingdoms of the World. (*Rom.* x. 18.) In *St Mark* it is, *Preach the Gospel to every Creature*. (*Mar.* xvi. 15.) And, in the 1st chapter to the *Colossians*, what in the 6th verse is expressed, the Gospel came into *All the World*, is at the 23d verse said to have been *preached to every Creature under Heaven*. The meaning of which is so obvious, that it would hardly need to be mentioned, but that it helps to illustrate a more difficult passage in the viiith to the *Romans*; where, when the Apostle had said at the 21st verse, *The creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the children of God*: He adds, ver. 23. *And not only they, but ourselves also which have the First-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the Adoption, to wit, the Redemption of our Body*. So that the words, *Creature* or *whole Creation*, seem to signify those many Nations, or the Bulk of Mankind, to whom the Gospel was afterwards to be preached; in contradistinction to the *First-fruits*, who received it in the Apostle's Time.

4thly, **H**ERE is the *Doctrine*, which all Nations were to be taught, and into which they were to be Baptized; *Baptizing them, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. This is that brief Summary of Christian Faith, which, in the Apostle's Time, Men were taught, and professed, and

had explained to them at their Baptism ; and the explication of it was afterwards well expressed in that *Form of Sound Words*, which is now usually called the *Apostle's Creed*. To be Baptized in the Name of the *Father*, it to profess our Belief, (as *St Paul* words it) in the *One God and Father of All, who is Above All, and Through all, and In All*, even the *Father Almighty, the Maker*, and Lord, and Supreme Governour of all things. To be Baptized in the Name of the *Son*, is to profess our Belief likewise in the *One Lord, Jesus Christ*, the only-begotten Son of God, the Messiah that was to come, the Redeemer and Saviour of Mankind, the Author and Purchaser of Forgiveness to Sinners, or of the Acceptation of Repentance through his Blood ; our great High Priest or Intercessor with God, and by the Appointment of the Father, our Judge at the last day. To be Baptized in the Name of the *Son*, signifies also further, to be Baptized *into his Death* : (Col. ii. 12.) *Know ye not*, saith *St Paul*, that so many of us as as were baptized into *Jesus Christ*, were baptized into his Death, Rom. vi. 3. And what *That* means, he tells us in the following verse, *We are buried with him by Baptism into Death*, (that the Body of Sin might be destroyed, ver. 6.) *that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so We also should walk in newness of Life*. Lastly, To be baptized in the Name of the *Holy Ghost*, signifies our Acknowledging the *Holy Spirit of God*, to be the Inspirer of the Apostles and Prophets ; the Comforter, and the Director of Christians ; that we submit ourselves to his Holy Guidance, receive the Doctrine inspired by him into the Apostles and Prophets, expect to be justified from our past Sins by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and to be preserved from Sin for the future by his Sanctification

tification and Assistance ; that we obey his good motions, take great care not to grieve or quench and drive him from us ; (Job. iii. 3, 5. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Tit. iii. 5.) and, forasmuch as *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body,—and have been all made to drink into one Spirit,* (1 Cor. xii. 13.) that therefore we endeavour by mutual Charity and Forbearance, to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.* This is the Meaning, of being *baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,* with respect to the several *Offices* of these three Divine Persons, in which Regard it is that the Scripture always speaks of them ; As to their *Metaphysical Nature* ; the Vanity of Men, speculating about *That* beyond what is written, has been the Occasion of many foolish Errors : Some have imagined three co-ordinate Beings, which is the Impiety of *Polytbeism*, and directly contrary to that Fundamental Article, the Unity of God : Others have contended, that they are one Person only, with three Modes or Denominations ; Which is the Heresy of *Sabellianism*, and destroys the Personality both of the Son and Holy Spirit : Some, in the contrary extreme, forsaking likewise the Phrases of Scripture, have presumed to affirm, that there was a Time, when the Son and Holy Spirit had no Being, and were made out of Nothing even as the meanest of Creatures ; which was the notion of *Arius* : And Others, diminishing yet further the Dignity of our Saviour's Person, have made him a mere Man, and denied his having any Being before he was born of the Virgin ; Which is the Error of *Socinus*. And now among this multiplicity of Errors, how shall a sincere and unlearned Christian behave himself ? Why, His Rule is ; Let him not follow vain men, in being Wise beyond what is written ; but

let him adhere to what he finds plainly and expressly delivered in Scripture : And This, as far as possible, in the very Scripture-Terms ; always remembring, where That cannot be done, yet so to understand all Phrases of human Composition, as to mean neither more nor less than the Scripture-Expressions. Now that which the Scripture declares concerning this Matter, is This : When one of the Scribes asked our Saviour, *Which is the first Commandment of all*, Jesus answered him, *The first of all the Commandments is ; Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord : To which the Scribe replied, Well, Master, thou hast said the Truth ; For there is One God, and there is none other but He*, Mar. xii. 29, 32. and 1 Cor. viii. 6. *To Us there is but One God, the Father, of whom are all things : and Eph. iv. 6, One God and Father of All, who is above All, and through All, and in you All*. Yet the same Scripture does likewise expressly affirm, that the Son also is God ; and to the Holy Spirit it ascribes Divine Powers and Attributes : How Then shall This be reconciled ? Plainly Thus : The Power and Authority of the Son and Holy Spirit, is neither *Another* Power and Authority, *opposite* to that of the Father ; nor *Another* Power and Authority, *co-ordinate* to that of the Father ; But it is *His* Power and Authority, communicated to Them, manifested in them, and exercised by them : And so there is plainly preserved both an Unity of Power, and a Monarchy of Government in the Universe.

5thly, To the *Form* of Baptism, our Saviour adds in the Text, the *Practice* of those who are to be baptized into This Faith. *Teaching them to Observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*. And This, is the Great End and Use of the whole. As Faith with-
out

out Works is dead ; so Baptism, without the Answer of a good Conscience towards God, is but the Washing away of the Filth of the Flesh. (1 Pet. iii. 21. Heb. x. 22. Eph. v. 26.) He that is baptized, must put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in the Spirit of his mind ; and put on the new man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness, Eph. iv. 22. He must, as St Paul elsewhere expresses it, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. xiii. 4.) Gal. iii. 27. As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. The Meaning is : He that is baptized into the Religion of Christ, must conform himself to the same pattern, must observe all things whatsoever He has commanded Us, must obey his Laws delivered in the Gospel ; otherwise his Baptism is vain, and his Profession but Hypocrisy.

6tibly and Lastly, HERE is the Promise of an effectual Assistance, to the Disciples sent forth upon This Commission : And, lo, I am with you always even unto the End of the World. Being with them always, 'tis evident did not signify his continuing personally with them ; For this Promise was made to them at the very Time, when he had declared he was about to leave them and ascend unto the Father. But it signifies, that he would continue with them by the guidance and direction of his Spirit ; which was in effect the same thing, as continuing with them himself. Thus God is in Scripture said to dwell in us Himself, when he dwells in us by his Spirit ; (Eph. ii. 22. Acts v. 4.) and he that lies to the Spirit of God, is justly accused of lying consequently to God Himself ; and he who rejects the preaching of an Apostle, is charged with rejecting

Christ; and he that rejects *Christ*, with rejecting *God Himself* who sent him.

CHRIST's being with his Disciples *to the End of the World* therefore, is his being with them by his Spirit. And This imports two things: 1st, His giving them the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, to inspire them with the Doctrine of Truth, and to enable them to confirm that Doctrine with miraculous Gifts; according to the promise, *St Mar. xvi. 17. These Signs shall follow them that believe; In my Name shall they cast out Devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up Serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the Sick, and they shall recover.* And 2^{dly} it implies, That, after this Foundation of the Church, by the Teaching and Miracles of the inspired Apostles; the Blessing of Providence, and the Assistance of the Divine Spirit, shall continue to preserve it; nor by raising up infallible Guides and unerring humane Authority, which never was in any Others than the Apostles themselves; but by supporting the Doctrine once delivered by the Apostles; against all the Violence and Frauds of its Opposers. *Thou art Peter*, says our Saviour, that is, a Rock; and upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell; i. e. Persecution and even Death itself, (for so the words properly signify,) shall not be able to prevail against it, *Mat. xvi. 18.* And what is meant by *St Peter's* being a Rock, or Stone, upon which the Church is built, is explained, *Eph. ii. 20.* where the Church is compared to a Building, the Apostles to Foundation-stones, and our Saviour himself to the Head of the Building: *Ye are built, saith St Paul,*
upon

upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Propbets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone ; In whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth unto a Holy Temple in the Lord ; In whom you also are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

THE HISTORY OF THE
REIGN OF
HENRY THE FIRST
BY
JOHN GILBERT FROTHINGHAM
OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II
LONDON
PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD
1825

1825

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S E R M O N V.

Of the different Gifts of the Spirit.

[Preached on Trinity Sunday.]

I COR. xii. 4, 5, 6.

Now there are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit ; And there are differences of Administrations, but the same Lord ; And there are diversities of Operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all.

IN these Words we have a distinct Account of three Divine Persons, concerned in bringing about the Salvation of Men ; and a brief Declaration of the nature of their several Offices, in accomplishing that great and merciful Design. There are in the *first* place Gifts of Miracles, of Signs and Wonders, for the Conviction of Infidels ; and there are Gifts of Grace, of virtuous and holy Dispositions, for the Sanctification and Improvement of Believers : And these are constantly

stantly ascribed in Scripture to the *Spirit of God*, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter: *There are diversities of Gifts; but the same Spirit.* There is in the 2d place a wonderful Oeconomy in the establishment and Government of the Church: Mankind was to be redeemed from the Power of Satan, and the Repentance of Sinners made acceptable before God, and available to the obtaining of pardon, consistently with the Justice and Wisdom and Honour of the Laws of God; by the offering up of a sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the Whole World: This Doctrine was to be revealed unto Men; and a Church gathered out of the whole World, of such as should embrace and obey this Revelation: An Order and Government was to be established, for the propagating this Church and conveying down this Doctrine by a perpetual Succession, even unto the End of the World: Perpetual Intercession was to be made to God by a Sinless High Priest, to make the Prayers of frail and sinful men acceptable in the Sight of Him, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity: A Resurrection of the Dead was to be appointed, a final Judgment passed, and a just and impartial retribution made to every man according to his Works: And These things are all ascribed in Scripture to the *Son of God*, even our Lord Jesus Christ; who, before his Incarnation, was the Word of the Father, the Angel of his Presence, the Brightness of his Glory, the express Image of his Person; and after his Incarnation, was the Redeemer and Saviour, the Mediator and Intercessor, the Lord and Judge of Mankind: *There are Differences of Administrations*, says the Apostle, *but the same Lord.* There is in the 3d and last place a Supreme and Absolute, a self-original, underrived and independent Authority, from whence all these

these things primarily and originally proceed, and to which the Glory of them must finally and ultimately be referred : And this is in Scripture constantly ascribed to God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who is the First and Supreme Author of every good Gift ; by whose good pleasure, our Lord himself was sent forth to redeem us ; and the Holy Spirit given, to sanctify us ; *There are Diversities of Operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all* : Or, as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it ; *Of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be Glory and Dominion for ever*. This is the Account the Scripture gives us, of the several Offices of these three Divine Persons. *There are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit ; and there are differences of Administrations, but the same Lord ; and there are Diversities of Operations, but 'tis the same God, that worketh all in all*. 'Tis God, by whose Supreme Authority every thing in the Universe is directed ; 'tis the Son of God, by whom the Government of the Church in particular is administered ; 'tis the Spirit of God, by whom all Gifts and Graces, for the Conviction of Infidels, and for the Sanctification of Believers, are dispensed. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the infinite and incomprehensible Fountain of underived Majesty, is the Spring and Original of all Good : The Son of the Father, it to Us the Author and Purchaser, the Conveyer of all Communications from that inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness ; and by his Mediation and Intercession, the only Means of Access and Approach to that Throne of otherwise inaccessible Glory : The Spirit of God, sent forth from the Father and the Son, is the immediate Dispenser and Distributer of those Benefits, which the Father grants by the Intercession of the Son.

THIS

THIS is what the Scripture clearly and expressly declares to us, concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In which Doctrine, because there are some things difficult to be understood, and not needful to be explained; wherein the vain Curiosity of men has often exposed its own weakness, and which profane and careless persons have wrested (as they do other Doctrines) to their own Destruction; therefore this matter ought not to be frequently and slightly treated of; but upon the most solemn Occasions, with the greatest care, and with the utmost reverence. And upon such Occasions; since the whole ground and foundation of Christian Religion, is the Belief of our Reconciliation to God, the Father and Supreme Lord of All, thro' the Death of his Son, and by the Influence of his Holy Spirit; and since *This is Life eternal, to know Him who is the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and the Spirit by whom he worketh in us every good work*: Since This, I say, is the very Foundation of Christian Religion; to have a right knowledge, of Him who is the Creator of the Universe, and Supreme Lord of the whole World; of him, who is the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind; and of him, who is the Sanctifier of the elect people, which is the Church of God: it is therefore very fit, that upon particular solemn Occasions, This great Doctrine, which ought not to be frequently and slightly handled, should with great Caution and Reverence be *explained* at Once: *Explained*; that is, not unfolded according to the presumptions of human Imagination; but *declared* so far, as 'tis expressly revealed in Scripture; and so far forth, as 'tis therefore intelligible, because it is revealed. For in Doctrines which are not made known by the Light of Reason and natural Understanding, but discovered merely

merely by Revelation, and which depend wholly on the Authority and Testimony of the Revealer ; in these things, human Imagination has no place, and the Opinion of no man is of any Importance, but only the express Words of the Revelation itself. In declaring therefore unto you, that which is clearly and without all controversy revealed in Scripture concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; I shall 1st consider briefly that which is *speculative*, concerning their Nature : 2^{dly}, That which is *moral*, relating to their Offices ; and 3^{dly}, That which is *practical*, concerning the Honour we are to pay unto them.

1st, I shall consider what is spoken in a *speculative* manner concerning their Nature. And This part being that, wherein we are least concerned, and which we are least capable to understand ; the Scripture is very brief in this particular : It being of much more importance that it should be clearly revealed to us, what they are *Relatively to Us*, than what their Nature is *absolutely in themselves*. Yet even upon This Head we find in Scripture, as follows. Concerning the Nature of *God the Father* : that, agreeable to the Light of natural Reason, there is One Supreme Absolute Independent Cause and Original of all things, Eternal, Infinite, All-Powerful, Self-sufficient ; the Maker and Lord of all things, himself derived from None, made of none, begotten of none, proceeding from none : By whom all Creatures material and immaterial, visible and invisible, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, mortal and immortal, in Heaven and in Earth were made ; by whom the Land and Waters, the Air and Sun and Stars, the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens, and all things that are therein ; Plants, and Beasts, and Men ; Angels and Arch-Angels ; were cre-

ated out of nothing : From whom the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter and Sanctifier of all Holy men, *proceedeth* or is sent forth : Of whom lastly the Son himself, the Saviour and Redeemer of the World, in an ineffable manner, before all Ages was *begotten*. This is the Supreme Father and Lord of all, who dwelleth in Light inaccessible ; whose Majesty, no Thought can comprehend ; whose Glory, no Eye can behold ; whose Power, no Strength can resist ; from whose Presence, no Swiftneſs can flee ; whose Knowledge, no Secrecy can conceal itſelf from ; whose Juſtice, no Art can evade ; whose Goodneſs no Creature but partakes of. This is the God of the Universe, whom even the Heathen World has always acknowledged. This is the God of *Abram*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* ; the God who brought the children of *Iſrael* out of the land of *Egypt* ; the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt ; of whom, and thro' whom, and to whom are all things ; to whom be Glory and Dominion for ever. But to proceed.

CONCERNING the *Nature* of the Son, That which the Scripture declares to us, (and otherwiſe than from Scripture we can have no Light, in matters of Revelation ;) That which the Scripture, I ſay, declares to us, is this : That, in the beginning, before the Foundation of the World, before all Ages, That Divine Perſon, who after and by his Incarnation became our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, had a Being in the Boſom of his Father, and was Partaker of his Father's Glory. *In the beginning was the Word ; and the Word was with God, i. e. was with the Father ; and the Word was God, (John i. 1.) i. e. was Partaker of his Father's Glory, of his Divine Power and Authority, in Creating and Governing the World.* The reaſon why This Divine Perſon was ſtilled *the Word*, has been much diſputed

puted by Divines; and various Opinions have at different Times prevailed. That which is most probable and most agreeable to the Scriptures, is, that he was so called, upon account of his being as it were the Mouth or Oracle of God, the Angel of his Presence, the great Declarer of his Will, the Mediator between God and his Creatures; by and thro' whom, as all Creatures have Access to God, and give Glory to him; so thro' him likewise are derived and conveyed all Communications of God to his Creatures. *In the beginning was the Word: That Word, which afterwards was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us; to reveal to us with Authority the whole Will of God: That Word, concerning whom the same Author St John thus speaks in another place; when in his Vision, seeing the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, (Rev. xix. 16.) coming forth in righteousness to judge and to make war, (ver. 11.) and to tread the wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God, (ver. 15.) he thus describes him; that out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, (ver. 15.) and his Name is called, The Word of God; (ver. 13.) and ch. i. 16. he beheld one like unto the Son of man, out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged Sword. Which Descriptions afford great Light to that passage of St Paul to the Hebrews, ch. iv. ver. 12. The Word of God is quick and Powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart. And this exactly answers the Description our Saviour gives of Himself, Rev. ii. 23. I am he which searcheth the reins and Hearts. Further, concerning the Nature of this Divine Person, the Word or Son of God, the Scripture adds; that he is the only begotten of the Father, and was in Glory with him be-*

fore the World was ; that he is the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, and upholding all things by the Word of his Power, Heb. i. 3. That he is the Image of the Invisible God, the first-born of every Creature, Col. i. 15. or, as he himself styles himself, Rev. iii. 14. the beginning of the Creation of God ; that is, who was before and above all things, being the first Principle and Head over all ; Himself, deriving immediately from the Father only ; (and, as to the manner of That, *who shall declare his generation ?*) Whereas all other things, all Creatures, were produced mediately by His Operation. For so St John affirms expressly ; *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*, St John i. 2. And St Paul still more distinctly, Col. i. 16. *By him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be Thrones or Dominions or Principalities or Powers, all things were created by him and for him ; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist*. If it be here demanded, how these two manners of Expression are to be reconciled, that God only is the Creator of all things, and yet all things are said expressly to be created by Jesus Christ ; St Paul gives a clear and direct Answer, Heb. i. 2. *By his Son God made the Worlds ;* and again, Ephes. iii. 9. *Who created all things by Jesus Christ*. To interpret these passages, as some have attempted to do, of a secondary and figurative Creation, the new Creation or Renovation of things by the Gospel ; is wresting Texts by a forced and unnatural Sense to serve an Opinion, when in their plain and literal meaning there is no real Difficulty. For to conceive that God created all things at first by his Son, is no more contrary to Reason, than his renewing or redeeming all things

things by his Son ; which is acknowledged by All. And if it pleased the Father, by Christ to reconcile all things unto Himself whether they be things in Earth or Things in Heaven ; as St Paul expressly affirms, and all men understand him to affirm it in the literal Sense ; there is no more reason to doubt, but in the literal Sense likewise, it pleased the Father by Christ to Create all things for Himself ; which is as expressly affirmed by the same Apostle. And even in the Old Testament itself, those passages which are spoken of Wisdom, *Prov. viii. 22.* are by all antient Christian Writers understood of God's creating the World by Christ : *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his Way, before his works of old ; I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the Earth was ; When there were no Depths, I was brought forth ; when there were no Fountains abounding with Water ; Before the Mountains were settled, before the Hills was I brought forth ; While as yet he had not made the Earth, nor the Fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the World ; When he prepared the Heavens, I was there ; when he set a compass upon the face of the deep ; When he established the clouds above ; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep ; When he gave to the Sea his Decree, that the Waters should not pass his Commandment ; when he appointed the Foundations of the Earth ; Then was I by him, as one brought up with him ; and I was daily his delight. If it be here further inquired, how those Divine Attributes and Powers, which are ascribed in Scripture to the Person of the Son, are consistent with the Unity of God, which is the Foundation of all Religion both natural and revealed ; the Answer is obvious ; that the Divinity ascribed to the Son, is not another, a co-ordinate Divinity ; but the Power, the Majesty, the Glory of the Father, communicated and derived to*

the Son. Could it be affirmed that there were two or more self-originate, unbegotten, underived Principles ; this would indeed destroy the Unity of God, and fundamentally subvert the very first Ground of Religion : But since the Glory of the Son is not originally his own Glory, but the Glory of the Father manifested in him, and derived to him, in a manner which neither we nor Angels perhaps can presume to understand ; 'tis manifest still, that the *Monarchy* of the Universe, is hereby preserved entire.

CONCERNING the *Nature* of the *Holy Spirit of God*, the Scripture speaks very little in a Metaphysical manner ; nor gives any incouragement to the inquisitiveness and vain Curiosity of humane Speculation. Declaring only, that he is a Divine Person, proceeding or being sent forth from the *Father* ; and in other places called the Spirit of the *Son*, and said to be sent forth from *Him*. Into the manner of his Derivation therefore, we ought not to presume to enquire ; but be content with what the Scripture reveals to us, of his being in a singular manner, in a manner which we cannot presume to understand or explain, *the Spirit of God*. Only, because there have been some in these later Ages, who have denied the Being of this Holy Spirit, and have imagined it to be nothing but a mere Power or Attribute of God ; it deserves to be taken notice of, that those Scriptures, which speak of him as being *grieved* at wicked men ; as making *intercession* for us, and *helping* our infirmities ; as *dividing* spiritual gifts *severally*, as he pleases ; as *speaking*, not of himself, but what he bears or receives from the *Father* ; these and numberless other Texts in the New Testament, do plainly declare Him to be, not a mere Virtue or Power, but a real Person distinct from the Father and the Son, and sent forth from

from Both for the perpetual Government and Direction of the Church.

THIS is what the Scripture briefly declares to us in a *speculative* manner, concerning the *Nature* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And happy had it been for the Church of God, if learned men in all Ages had been content with what the Scriptures so declare, and had never entred further into Scholastic Speculations, from whence have arisen Endless Disputes, incurable Scepticism, and infinite Uncharitableness.

2dly, THERE is in the 2d place that which is *Moral*, concerning the several *Offices* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost with relation to *Us*. And here the Scripture teaches us, concerning the *Father*, that he, being absolutely supreme over all, *made* the World by the Ministration of his Son, and *governs* it by a perpetual Providence, without which not a Sparrow falls to the Ground, or a Hair of our Head perishes. That having Compassion upon sinful man, and resolving to afford them the Grace of Repentance, (*Rom. iii. 25.*) he sent his Son to take our Nature upon him, (*1 John iv. 9, 14.*) and therein to reveal his gracious Will; and delivered him up to an ignominious Death, that he might make Expiation and Reconcilement for our Sins; and raised him from the Dead by his mighty Power; (*Acts v. 30.*) and exalted him to his own right Hand; and appointed him to be the Judge of Quick and Dead; and has made all things subject unto Him; and by him reconciles all things unto Himself, both which are in Heaven and which are in Earth: and has appointed a Kingdom of eternal Happiness to them that serve and obey him; and will destroy the wicked with an everlasting Destruction. This is the *Office* of the *Father*. Concerning the *Office* of the *Son*, the same Scriptures declare,

declare, that he, by the Appointment of the Father, is our Saviour, Mediator, Intercessor and Judge ; that having been in the Form of God, he emptied himself of that Glory, and willingly took upon him the form of a servant and died, to make our Repentance available ; and now sits at the right hand of God, to intercede for us ; and governs the whole Church, according to the Will of his Father ; and searches and tries the Hearts of men at present, and will finally judge them according to their Works. Lastly, concerning the *Office* of the *Holy Spirit*, the Scripture teaches, that having been the *Inspirer* of the Prophets of old, testifying beforehand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow ; (2 *Pet.* i. 21. 1 *Pet.* i. 11.) he was afterwards sent forth in a more extraordinary manner, to be the Comforter and Director of the Apostles ; (*John* xiv. 1 *Cor.* ii. 10.) to lead them into all Truth ; to bring to their remembrance all things which our Lord had said unto them ; to support them against the Power of the World ; to instruct them what to answer to their Persecutors ; to be the great Witness of our Saviour's Resurrection, by working Signs and Wonders and mighty Works, by inspiring the Apostles with the gift of Tongues, and dividing to their followers diversities of Gifts, to every man severally, as might best serve the great end of their ministry : (1 *Cor.* xii. 11.) finally, to continue with all good Christians even unto the End of the World, as the great Sanctifier of the Hearts of men ; assisting them with his grace, admonishing them with his Holy Influences, working with them and inspiring them with his good Gifts, and helping the infirmity of their Prayers with his own Intercession. This is what the Scripture teaches us *distinctly* and *separately*, concerning the several Offices of the Father,

the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are also in some few places all mentioned *together* ; as in the Form of Baptism, whereby we are dedicated to the Service of God, baptized into the Death of his Son, and given up to the guidance of his Holy Spirit : In the form of Blessing, wherein we are recommended by the Apostle to the Love of God, to the Favour of Christ, and to the Communion or Fellowship of the Holy Ghost : (*Epb. ii. 18. 1 Cor. viii. 6. 1 Tim. ii. 5.*) By St Paul again, *Epb. iv. 4, 5, 6. There is one Spirit, — one Lord, — one God and Father of all, who is above all, and thro' all, and in you all* : And in the Words of the Text ; *There are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit ; and there are diversities of Administrations, but the same Lord ; and there are diversities of Operations, but 'tis the same God, that worketh all in all.*

It remains in the 3d and last place, that we consider that which is *Practical*, concerning the Honour due to the Person of the Father, and concerning that which is due to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. To the Person of the *Father*, is to be directed that absolute and supreme Worship, by which he is acknowledged to be alone *Παντοκράτωρ*, the Maker and Judge of all ; (*Heb. xii. 23.*) by whose incomparable Power, the World was created ; by whose unerring Providence, the Universe is governed ; by whose supreme Authority, our Lord was sent forth to redeem Us ; by whose good pleasure the Holy Spirit is *given*, to sanctify us ; to whose glory, every tongue *now* confesses that Jesus is the Lord ; (*Acts v. 32. xv. 8. 1 Thess. iv. 8. Heb. ii. 4. 2 Cor. i. 22 ; ver. 5. Phil. ii. 11.*) and to whom, at the Consummation of all things, our Lord himself shall deliver up the Kingdom, and become subject to *Him* that put all things under him, that God may be *all in all* :

all: (1 Cor. xv. 24 ; xi. 3.) To *Him* we are to pray for the Remission of our Sins ; and that our Repentance may be accepted, thro' the powerful Intercession of Christ our great High Priest ; and that our Hearts may be renewed by the Inspiration of his Holy Spirit : and to *Him* we are to give Continual Thanks, for his *original* and undeserved Goodness in sending his Son at first to be the Saviour of the World, and to be unto us a propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood ; and for the *continuation* of that Goodness, in affording us the perpetual assistance of the Holy Ghost.

To the Person of the *Son*, there is due this peculiar Honour ; that we offer up all our Prayers in his Name ; (*whatsoever*, says he, *ye shall ask of the Father in my Name, he will give it you*, John xv. 16.) that we rely upon his merits, depend upon his Intercession, obey him as our Lord, love him as our Saviour, fear him as our Judge. That we acknowledge his great Condescension, in loving us and giving himself for us ; in that, when he was *in the form of God, he was not greedy of retaining that form, but willingly made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross*, Phil. ii. 6. For which reason, as the Apostle adds in the Words immediately following, *God also has highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name ; that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*. And accordingly upon this Account, we find the highest Honour ascribed to him both by men and Angels ;

Rev.

Rev. v. 8. *The four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb,——and sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy——; For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy Blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation;——And I heard the voice of many Angels——, saying——, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and Blessing: And every Creature——heard I saying, Blessing and honour and Glory and Power be unto him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. And ch. i. 5. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and has made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever. This is the peculiar Addition of the Christian Religion; that whereas before, all men honoured the Father, they should now likewise Honour the Son, St John v. 23. Which Honour paid to the Son of God, is therefore no diminution to the Honour of the Father, nor derogation from the Monarchy of the Universe; because the Greatness and Dignity, the Divinity and Majesty of the Son, is not contradistinct to, but derivative from, that of the Father; and consequently must be acknowledged to that very End, that it may be (as St Paul expressly declares) to the glory of the Father.*

Lastly, CONCERNING the Honour peculiarly due to the person of the Spirit, that which the Scripture declares, is; that we acknowledge him to be the divine Inspirer of the Prophets, both of the old and new Testament; and the immediate Worker of all those Signs and Wonders in proof of the Christian Dispensation, which are properly stiled the Witness and Testimony, the Power and Demonstration of the Spirit; that he is also the Sanctifier of all Hearts, and the immediate
Distri-

Distributer of all the Gifts of God, for the Edification of his Church ; that therefore we receive and believe his Testimony, as delivered in the inspired Writings ; obey his good Motions ; be solicitous to obtain his gifts and graces ; and infinitely careful not to grieve and quench and drive him from us, lest we be found to do despite unto the Spirit of grace ; (*Eph. v. 9. Gal. v. 22. ver. 16. 1 John ii. 27. Eph. iv. 30. 1 Tb. v. 19. Heb. x. 29.*) which is in Scripture represented as a more unpardonable fault, than offending against the Person even of our Saviour himself. But the Time allows me only to hint these things barely, and propose them to your Meditations ; the enlarging upon which, would be to lay down the whole System of Divinity. God grant that every one of Us, may so give Honour to the Father of all things, thro' the Mediation and Intercession of his Son our Saviour, and by the Assistance and Operation of his Holy Spirit ; that by the communion and fellowship of the same Holy Spirit, and thro' the Merits and Death of the Son of God making our Repentance available, we may be presented faultless before the Throne of the Father of inaccessible Majesty, in the great Day.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Of the Desire of Knowledge.

[*Preached on Trinity-Sunday*]

DEUT. xxix. 29.

*The Secret things belong unto the Lord our God;
but those things which are revealed, belong
unto us and to our children for ever, that
we may do all the words of this law.*

THE book of *Deuteronomy* contains a brief Summary, or Recapitulation of the Law; to which are added by *Moses*, several earnest and most affectionate Exhortations to the people of *Israel*, to persuade them to the Obedience and Observation of that Law. He tells them that *he hath set before them Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing, Good and Evil*; and he persuades them to chuse their Duty, and cleave to it as their Life, and to refuse the Evil and flee from it as from Death. He invites them to Obedience by the most affectionate promises of the love, and favour, and protection of God; and he deters them from Dis-

VOL. VI. I obedience

obedience by the most severe threatnings of utter destruction. He proposes to them the Law of God, as the proper subject of their constant Meditation ; exhorting them ‘ to bind it for a Sign upon their hand, and ‘ as frontlets between their eyes ; to write it upon the ‘ posts of their houses, and upon their gates ; to teach ‘ it diligently unto their children, and to talk of it ‘ when they sit in their houses, and when they walk ‘ by the way, and when they lie down, and when they ‘ rise up,’ *Deut. vi. 7, 8.* He tells them that *the commandments of God are the things revealed to them, to be studied by them and by their children for ever* ; that the knowledge of other things, is in comparison either unnecessary, or more difficult at least, and less needful to be attained ; and that therefore nothing could be more unreasonable, than to pursue the knowledge of those things which were either wholly unnecessary, or at least far less needful to be known ; by neglecting the study and the knowledge of that, in which alone consisted their Happiness and their Life. ‘ The Secret ‘ things belong unto the Lord our God ; but those ‘ things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our ‘ children for ever, that we may do all the words of ‘ this law.’ The ultimate design and desire of Man, is Happiness ; and as the only way to this Happiness is Religion, so the Knowledge of that Religion ought to be at least our principal and first study. Religion is *the doing all the Words of the Law, i. e.* the obeying of the Commandments of God ; the Knowledge therefore of Religion, is the knowing particularly what are the Commands of God, and the knowing our obligation to obey those Commands. He that hath gained so much Knowledge, as to understand the Commandments of God, and to convince himself of his *indispensable*

penfable Obligation to obey them ; fo as to live constantly in the fense and under the power of that Conviction ; The *Words of this Law*, are the Commandments of God ; which he that has ftudied fo as to underftand and praftife them, is fufficiently knowing, though he were ignorant of all other things, becaufe he knows his Happinefs which is his main Concern, and the way to attain it. He that is ignorant of this, though he had all other Knowledge that were poffible to be acquired either by Men or Angels, is yet miferably and foolifhly ignorant, becaufe he is ignorant of that, which is indeed the only thing that is neceffary for him to know. A religious man *may* lawfully divert his thoughts, and exercife his induftry, in other Speculations ; but he will not fo far engage his curiofity in the fearch after *fecret* things, as to neglect thofe which are *open* and *revealed*, thofe on which the true Knowledge or Worfhip of God does any way depend. There are *some* Things, which are abfolutely *beyond* the reach of our Faculties, and therefore not *poffible* to be thoroughly underftood by us ; and thefe a good man will not be ambitious to difcover, becaufe he confiders that God has placed them wholly out of the Sphere of our capacity, and referved the Knowledge of them as a Prerogative to himfelf. There are *other* things, which if we can come at all to the Knowledge of, it muft be by unwarrantable or unlawful means ; and thefe likewife a religious man will not be inquisitive to know, nor uneasy for want of that Knowledge ; becaufe he confiders that God has hidden them from us, by forbidding the ufe of the means to difcover them. There are alfo *some other* things, which are neither impoffible nor unlawful to be known, but the Search after them is difficult, and the Difcovery unprofitable ;

fitable; they neither promote the true Knowledge, Honour, and Worship of God, nor the Benefit of Mankind; and these, a pious man, will not be too much solicitous to find out; because they would take up too much of that Time and those Meditations, which may be *more* usefully employed on the things that God has revealed. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever.' From the words I shall observe these three things; 1st, That there is naturally in Man, a very strong Desire of Knowledge; 2^{dly}, That this Desire, ought to be regulated and limited by the Condition of our Nature, and by the Word of God; and 3^{dly}, That not to regulate our Desire of Knowledge by these Rules, may be a very great occasion of sin.

I. THERE is naturally in Man a very strong Desire after Knowledge. 'Tis the peculiar Attribute and Prerogative of *God*, to be infinitely perfect; and to be originally and unchangeably so. All *created* Beings, as far as we can judge of them, arrive at that Perfection which is the highest pitch and excellency of *Their* nature, by *degrees*; and they have always in themselves a natural and earnest tendency towards that perfection. In things void of Reason and Knowledge, the perfection of *Their* Nature is nothing else, but a compleat Number, a due Proportion, and a regular Composition of parts; and *Their* natural tendency towards this perfection, is nothing but that Disposition which arises from the necessary qualities of Matter, and from the fixed laws of Motion. But in Creatures endued with Reason and Understanding, the Perfection of *their* Nature consisting principally in the Improvement of those more excellent Faculties; 'tis manifest

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They can aspire to what degree they please, and are apt to extend their desires without limit. *I gave my Heart,* saith *Solomon,* *to seek and search out by Wisdom, concerning all things that are done under Heaven.* And the Scripture declares concerning him, *that he had Wisdom and Understanding exceeding much, and largeness of Heart even as the Sand that is on the Sea-shore; so that before him was none equal to him, neither after him should there arise any like him.* And yet even *He,* by departing from the study of the Law of God, and giving heed to strange Women, was a sad Example of falling from God in his latter days. Wherefore, though there be naturally in men a very earnest Desire after Knowledge, yet I add,

II. THIS our Desire of Knowledge, ought to be regulated and limited, by the Condition of our Nature and by the Word of God.

1st, WE ought not to be ambitious of that Knowledge, which the condition and circumstances of our Nature make it impossible for us to obtain. Knowledge is so amiable a perfection, that men will not readily be persuaded, they can possibly be too earnest in the pursuit of it, even though it be in things which have no relation to the Honour of God, or to the Good of men. 'Tis true, God hath given us Faculties, which we not only may, but ought to improve; but then we must always remember, that our Desires ought to terminate in such possible and useful Perfections, as are to be attained by the improvement of the Faculties God has given us. Wisdom indeed is the principal thing, says Solomon, *therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding,* Prov. iv. 7. and ch. xviii. 15. *The heart of the Prudent getteth Knowledge, and the ear of the Wise seeketh it.* But by Knowledge, He

always means *religious* Wisdom, and not that which terminates only in *Pride* and *Vanity*; much less, that which by nature we are not made capable of attaining. In which respect, a man's Desire after Knowledge may become faulty, either when he desires the Knowledge of such a *kind* of things, as the nature of the things does not permit him at all to understand; or when he desires such a *sort* of Knowledge of any thing, as the nature of his Faculties does not capacitate him to come up to. There are some *kinds* of things, of so abstruse a Nature, or at such a distance of Place or Time, or which have so little connexion with That Knowledge of God and of ourselves, on which our whole Duty depends; that they are altogether beyond the reach of our Faculties; so that we cannot possibly understand them at all; and in respect of *these* things, 'tis evident we ought *so* to limit our Desire of Knowledge by the *condition* and *circumstances* of our Nature, as not to attempt to understand them at all; and not to pretend that we *can* understand them, when indeed we *can not*. Of *other* things, which we can and ought to know according to the measure of our Faculties, there is yet such a *sort* or degree of Knowledge as we cannot arrive to; and we have no more reason to murmur, that we cannot attain to this *degree* of Knowledge, than we have to be displeased, that God has not made us equal to the highest Orders of Angels; or than the Angels have cause to be angry, that God has reserved some Attributes incommunicable from himself, and has not made *them* Masters of all Perfections. God hath communicated to every sort of creatures, such Perfections as himself pleased; and the condition of each of their Natures is the Law of God, by which they ought every one to limit and regulate their Desires. In mat-
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ters of Religion indeed, in order to frame right Notions of God, and to serve him acceptably ; we can never be too solicitous and careful in inquiring into the Truth : But *some* Secrets there are, the knowledge of which God hath reserved to himself ; and the highest Angels cannot presume to look into them. And without question Angels have a clear Knowledge of many things, which humane Abilities cannot without the utmost folly pretend to discover. Remarkable to this purpose is that Expostulation of God with Job ; *Hast thou entred into the springs of the Sea ? or hast thou walked in the search of the Depth ? Have the gates of Death been opened unto thee ; or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of Death ? Where is the way where Light dwelleth ? and as for Darknes, where is the place thereof ? Knowest thou it because thou wast then born ? or because the number of thy days is great ?* ch. xxxviii. ver. 16. The Meaning is, *Not* that men may not commendably inquire into the operations of Nature, which are the Works of God ; so far as they have Faculties and Opportunities to do it ; But that they ought to contain their Desire of Knowledge within the bounds of those Faculties, and not be proud and imperious, *intruding into things which they have not seen, and vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind.*

2dly, As we ought not to be ambitious of what 'tis impossible for us to attain ; so neither ought we to be solicitous after that, which 'tis unlawful for us to desire. And here, that which the Scripture determines in respect of our Desire after Knowledge, is this ; *1st*, That we ought not to endeavour to penetrate into things too deep for us, such as are the *bidden and secret counsels, or unrevealed decrees of God.* True Notions of God, as discoverable by Reason, and the full Meaning

Meaning of his whole revealed Will ; these things we can never be too inquisitive after : But what cannot be known clearly by Reason or Revelation, concerns us not. *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed, to us and to our children for ever. Vain men would be wise, Job xi. 12. intruding into those things which they have not seen, and desiring to impose them upon others. But can we by searching find out God ? Can we find out the Almighty unto perfection ? It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do ? deeper than Hell, what canst thou know ? Job xi. 7, 8. And AEs i. 7. It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.*

2dly, The Scripture further forbids the desire of that Knowledge, the means of obtaining which are unlawful. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, appeared to our First parents *to be pleasant to the Eye, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise, Gen. iii. 6.* But since God had expressly forbidden them *to taste of the Fruit of that Tree,* having reserved it as a single instance of Homage and Acknowledgement to Himself, as being the Creator and Lord of Paradise ; 'tis evident the Desire of that Knowledge, which they thought the eating of that Fruit would furnish them with, was at least the Occasion and the Cause of their Sin. In like manner, the same Desire of *such* Knowledge, as God has not afforded us the means of acquiring ; has since in all Ages of the world, through the deceit and temptations of the Devil, put vain and superstitious persons upon such courses and means to attain it, as God has absolutely and expressly prohibited.

3dly, The Scripture forbids us *so* to search after the Knowledge of any thing else whatever, as in the too earnest pursuit of *that*, to neglect the study of the Law of God,

God. Those divine Truths, which influence our practice, which furnish our minds with worthy Notions of God, and charitable Dispositions towards our Neighbours, and *make men wise unto Salvation*; are the things which God has proposed to us to converse with and meditate, to fix our thoughts and our studies upon. In other things, *There is a wisdom, saith the Wise man, that multiplieth bitterness; and there is a Knowledge which bringeth nothing but weariness.* To study the works of God and Nature so, as therein to admire and adore the Wisdom of their Almighty Creator; to study and search out the great Truths of Religion in such a manner, as thereby to be perswaded to conform our practice in earnest to the rules of the divine Law; *this only is truly worthy of a Man, and acceptable to God; this only is a study which will yield us present Satisfaction and future also; which will afford us the truest Contentment now, and the solideest and most substantial Joy at the last.* David found such satisfaction in this Contemplation of the works and of the Law of God, that he declares he could entertain himself with the Meditation of God's Law all the day long, and in the night season also he could think upon the same, Psal. cxix. 55. and Solomon, who had given his Curiosity the most unbounded liberty, and had beyond comparison the largest extent of Knowledge that was ever attained by any mortal man; *whose Wisdom compassed the whole Universe, and his Understanding and largeness of Heart was exceeding great, even as the sand upon the sea-shore*; this great man (I say,) when he came seriously to compare all things that he had observed, and to consider the last Issue of things, he concludes all his Meditations with this wise Reflexion, Eccles. xii. 13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter;*

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Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole ; the whole Duty, and the whole Happiness of Man. It remains that I proceed now in the

III. *Third place, To show how great a Sin it is, not to regulate our Desires of Knowledge, by the forementioned Rules. And 1st, To determine dogmatically in things not clearly revealed, and to take delight in imposing upon each other such Determinations, is in effect directly opposing and striving against that Order and Constitution of things, which God has appointed ; and endeavouring to make ourselves what God has not made us. Instead of being thankful for those Faculties and Capacities, which God has freely indued us with, 'tis ungratefully murmuring against him, because he has not given us every thing that our unreasonable Fancies may suggest to us to desire, but has left us great occasions for Modesty, for mutual Charity and Forbearance. We are made capable of knowing and imitating our great Creator, and of being made happy by that Knowledge and that Imitation ; and is not this sufficient for us, unless we be admitted also to determine with peremptoriness, and to impose upon each other our own Opinions concerning those Secrets, which infinite Wisdom has not thought fit to reveal clearly to us ? All other created Beings contain themselves willingly within the bounds of their Natures, and cheerfully move within the limits of the sphere that God has prescribed them ; except sinful men, lovers of Power, and insolent towards each other ; and excepting also those Apostate Spirits, who kept not their first estate, but having revolted from God, are reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. That a proud aspiring after something not attainable by them in those circumstances wherein God had created and placed them,*

them, was the cause of these Angels Fall, the Scripture frequently intimates to us ; As in that Allusion of the Prophet *Isaiab*, ch. xiv. ver. 12. *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning ? — For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God, I will sit also upon the mount of the Congregation, in the sides of the North ; I will ascend above the heights of the Clouds, I will be like the most High ; yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the sides of the pit.* Which though applied indeed in that place by the Prophet to the King of *Babylon*, yet the Allusion seems to be borrowed from some greater and higher Event. What it was in particular, that this Pride prompted those wicked Spirits to aspire to, the Scripture does not expressly acquaint us ; But since we cannot conceive that they could aspire to the Power and Majesty of God, which 'twas impossible they could be so weak as to imagine it could be aimed at by any created Being ; 'tis probable their Crime might be the aspiring proudly and imperiously to some degree or kind of Knowledge, which God had with-held from them. 2dly, The not regulating this Desire by the fore-mentioned rules, was the occasion of our First parents Fall. This appears from the description of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, *Gen. iii. 6.* *When the Woman saw that the Tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise or knowing, she took of the Fruit and did eat.* 'Tis also evident from the description of the manner of the Temptation, ver. 5. *God doth know*, saith the Tempter, *that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil.* The Temptation proposed, was the Knowledge

of

of Good and Evil ; and That which principally prevailed upon the Woman to eat of the Fruit of the Tree, was its appearing desirable to make one wise. *What* is here meant particularly by the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Scripture does not directly explain to us. That it was not the Knowledge of any particular *sort* of Good and Evil, is evident ; For since the Understanding of our First parents, as all their other Faculties were much more perfect *before* than *after* the Fall ; 'tis evident they could not but have a perfect Knowledge of all *natural* Good and Evil, and a right Understanding concerning the Nature of all *moral* Good and Evil ; excepting only the *experimental* Knowledge of both these Sorts of Evil, which 'tis impossible to suppose could be a temptation. It remains therefore that the Knowledge of Good and Evil, with which our First parents were tempted, was not the Knowledge of any particular *things*, but some particular *kind* or *manner* of knowing them : Possibly a Desire of *foreknowing* things to come ; or some other such *sort* of Knowledge, as in the present state and circumstances of their Nature they were not capable of attaining. *3dly* and *lastly*, A Desire of Knowledge not regulated and limited by the Rules before set down, is very apt to put men upon unlawful practices, to attain what they so desire. For that which is not to be attained but by sinful and unwarrantable practices, the *Desire* of it cannot but be *also* sinful. What remains therefore, is by way of inference to apply what hath been said ; and, by giving some particular instances, to reduce to practice what has been discoursed in general, concerning our Desire of Knowledge and the limitations of it.

AND *1st*, From what has been said, it follows, that the vain Desire of knowing beforehand things to come,

is such a Desire of the Knowledge of secret things, as is not permitted us by the present circumstances and condition of our Nature, or by the Word of God. 'Tis the peculiar Attribute of God, and not communicable to any finite Being, to foreknow all things that *shall* be, before they come to pass ; and therefore the Prophet, when he would expose the Vanity of worshipping Idols or false Gods, challenges them to foretel future Events ; *Let them bring forth their strong reasons, and shew us what shall happen ; show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods, Isai. xli. 22 and 23.* Yet because the power of Beings superiour to us, is great and unknown ; vain and superstitious men have therefore in All Ages been too apt to be seduced with Imaginations of the possibility of such Discoveries. In the times of Heathen Darknefs and Ignorance, the Devil by giving sometimes doubtful and ambiguous Answers, which to be sure should be interpreted to the truest sense, which way soever the Event might happen to determine it ; and sometimes by giving such dark and obscure Oracles, as, though no man could make any sense of them, yet they insensibly filled mens minds with an awful respect and veneration for the Author of them ; by these means, I say, the Devil enslaved the *Gentile* World, and kept them in a constant course of Idolatry. Or, if most of these things were, as is probable enough, only the Frauds of wicked and profane *men*, to impose upon the Ignorant ; yet still the Event was much the same, in abusing their Credulity and unjustifiable Desire of Knowledge, to confirm them in their Idolatrous Practices. The *Jews*, who by the Knowledge of the true God and the Discovery of his Will made to them in the Law, were in a great measure freed from the bondage of such Superstitions ;

yet whenever they fell away from God, and began to neglect his Worship and distrust his Providence, one instance of their Disobedience presently was, having recourse to unlawful ways of Inquiry after Knowledge. Thus when the Lord would not answer *Saul* because of his Disobedience, immediately he betakes himself to a Method, which *Moses* tells the *Israelites* was one of those Abominations, because of which *the Lord thy God doth drive the Nations out from before thee ; For these Nations, which thou shalt possess, bearkened unto Observers of times, and unto Diviners, Deut. xviii. 10.* And among *Christians* 'tis observable, that those always who have least Knowledge of God, and least Trust in his Providence, and least Understanding in the true System and Powers of Nature, have the greatest Confidence in groundless Pretences and unwarrantable Methods of pursuing Knowledge. It matters not, that the Pretences to supernatural ways of knowing things, are commonly mere Cheat and Fraud ; it is a degree of this Sin, if Incouragement be given to such false Pretences. And to pretend to know things by the *Stars*, which introduces Fatality and destroys Religion ; is not much different from pretending to know them by Arts that have worse Names.

2dly, FROM what hath been said it follows, that a Desire of prying into the hidden and unrevealed Decrees, Counsels, and Purposes of *God*, and desiring to impose upon Others our Opinions concerning them ; is also such a Desire of the Knowledge of secret things, as is not permitted us by the Law of our nature, or by the Word of God. The measure of our Knowledge of divine things, is That revelation, which God has been pleased to make to us in his holy Scripture ; This, we can never study with too much care and exactness ;
But

But whatever pretends to go beyond these bounds, is presumptuous and unwarrantable. Those things which God has revealed to us, we may know, because God has discovered them to us ; and we are *bound* with all diligence to search after the knowledge of them, because they are proposed to us as the rule of our life, and the condition of our happiness. *More* than God has made known to us of this kind, we *cannot* discover ; and to pretend to understand, and confidently impose upon each other what God has not thought fit clearly to reveal, is no less foolish and absurd, than 'tis unreasonable and sinful. *For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellour ?* Rom. xi. 34. Only in general this *one* thing we may depend upon as certain, that no secret Counsel or Purpose or Decree of God can be contrary to his Will revealed in his Word. Upon what conditions God has appointed that men should be happy or miserable, he has clearly and fully revealed to us in his Holy Scriptures ; and more than this, 'tis neither necessary nor possible for us to know.

3dly and lastly ; AN over earnest Desire of knowing things subtle and unnecessary to be known, so as in the pursuit of the knowledge of these things, to neglect the Study of that which more nearly concerns us ; is also a sort of that search after knowledge which is forbidden in the Scripture. Whatever hath no relation to the Honour and true Worship of *God*, and promotes not righteousness and charity among *Men* : Whatever tends not *so* to inform our judgments, as to rectify our practice and reform our lives, is useless and unprofitable. Let us then in the first place endeavour to attain that Knowledge which may make us wise unto Salvation ; and always so regulate our inquiries after other things, as not to neglect the Study of that, which is our interest

and our life. I conclude with the words of the wise Son of Sirach : Eccles. iii. 21. *Many are in high places of Renown ; but mysteries are revealed to the meek. Seek not out the things that are too hard for thee, nor search the things that are above thy strength : But what is commanded thee, think thereon with reverence ; for it is not needful for thee to see with thine Eyes the things that are in secret.*

SERMON

S E R M O N VII.

Of the Testimony of our S A -
V I O U R ' s Doctrines.

[Preached on Trinity-sunday.]

I J O H. v. 8.

*And there are Three that bear Witness in Earth,
the Spirit and the Water and the Blood ;
And these Three agree in One.*

TH E Words of the foregoing Verse, which have no relation to the Argument the Apostle is here insisting upon, I shall not take into consideration at this time ; for a reason Now well-known to all who carefully study the Scriptures, and not needful to be mentioned in This place. But confining my Discourse to the words of the Text itself, I shall 1st endeavour to explain distinctly, their connexion with the whole Thread of the Apostle's Reasoning in this chapter ; and 2^{dly}, I shall consider, the *Doctrine* particularly contained in the words themselves.

I. IN the *first verse* of This Chapter, St *John* lays down the *General Doctrine*, which is the Subject of this whole epistle : *Whosoever* (says he) *believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* To be born of God, signifies, by an easy Figure of Speech, to be what the Scripture calls a *Child of God*, a *regenerate person*, one that *loves God and keeps his Commandments* ; living in the habitual Practice of universal Virtue and Righteousness. And such a person is every one, who *believeth that Jesus is the Christ* : Not, every one who *professes* to believe, but who *does believe* : Not, every one who *pretends* to be, but who *really is*, a *sincere Christian*. The reason why the Apostle expresses sincere Christianity by this particular phrase of *believing that Jesus is the Christ*, is because there were even Then some false Apostles, in whom *the mystery of iniquity did already work* : Who taught, that *Jesus* was not indeed the *Christ* : That *Christ*, the *Son of God*, was not indeed incarnate, *was not made Man* and suffered for us *really*, but in *appearance only* : That *Jesus*, the person born of the Blessed Virgin, was not *himself* the *Christ*, the *Son of God* ; but that *Christ*, the *Son of God*, was another person, fictitiously and in Name only united to *Jesus* who was the *Son of Man*. Against these false Teachers, the Apostle argues thro' this whole Epistle ; ch. ii. 22. *Who is a Liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ ?* From the Context it appears evidently, that he is not there arguing against professed Unbelievers, but against pretended Christians, who denied the reality of our Lord's incarnation. Again, ch. iv. 1. *Beloved, believe not every Spirit*, (that is, every Prophet or Teacher,) *but try the Spirits whether they are of God ; because many false Prophets are gone out into the World* : *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God ; Every Spirit that confesses that*

that *Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh*, (that is to say, that the Son of God was really incarnate and made Man for us,) *is of God* : And every Spirit that confesseth not, that *Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh* ; is not of God. Again, 2 Epist. v. 7. *Many deceivers are entered into the World, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh*. And in the 4th ch. of this 1st epistle, ver. 15 ; and ch. v. 1, 5 ; the Phrases, *to confess that Jesus is the Son of God*, *to believe that Jesus is the Christ*, and *to believe that Jesus is the Son of God*, are All used in the like Sense, to express the reality of the incarnation of the Son of God, and that he truly and personally, (not in appearance and Name only,) became the Son of Man. Hence, thro' this whole Epistle, these and the like expressions are constantly to be understood as signifying *True and Sincere Christians*. And therefore, I say, the General Doctrine, laid down by St John in the first verse of this Fifth Chapter, (and the Subject-matter indeed of the whole epistle,) is This ; that every sincere Christian is a regenerate person, one that loves God and keeps his Commandments ; living in the habitual Practice of universal Virtue and Righteousness.

ON the other side : Whosoever loves God, and desires to keep his Commandments, and is disposed to become a regenerate person ; will hardly fail of being sincerely a Christian : For so the Apostle goes on in the latter part of the first verse ; *Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him* ; Every one that sincerely loves God, every one that is of a good and virtuous Disposition, will naturally love the religion of Christ. And, that no man might mistake, wherein this Love of God consists ; he defines it in express words, ver. 3. *This, says he, is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments : and his Commandments are*

not grievous. And the Reason why his Commandments are not grievous, is because (says he, ver. 4.) *whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World* ; A true Child of God, a sincere Christian, will despise and conquer all the Temptations of a sinful and debauched World. And the Means, by which he is enabled to conquer these Temptations, is Faith ; *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith* : Our Faith, our firm Belief, of the Being and Government of God, and of his having appointed a day wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness ; this is what will not fail to prevail over the temptations, of a wicked and debauched World. And because 'tis by the Revelation of Christ, by the Doctrine and Preaching of the Gospel, that this Faith or firm Belief of a future Judgment is principally established in the minds of men ; therefore in the 5th verse the Apostle proceeds to explain this Faith in the following manner ; *Who is He that overcometh the World, but he which believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?* that is, that he is the True Messiah which was to come into the World, the Person appointed to be the Judge of Quick and Dead.

THAT This is plainly the Meaning of the Phrase, appears from the parallel places wherein the Scripture expresses the same Sense in Other Words. Thus, what in this 5th verse is, *believing that Jesus is the Son of God* ; is in the 1st verse, *believing that Jesus is the Christ*. And St Peter's confession, which in St Matthew's words, ch. xvi. 16. is, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God* ; is, in St Mark's words, ch. viii. 29. *Thou art the Christ*. Again : The Question put to our Lord by the High-Priest, which in St Matthew's words, ch. xxvi. 63. is, *whether thou be the Christ the*

the Son of God ; is, in St Luke's words, ch. xxii. 67. *Art thou the Christ ? And Nathanael, in His Confession, Job. i. 49, uses these two, as known Synonymous expressions ; Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.*

THE Faith therefore, which, St John here tells us, *overcometh the World* ; is the believing that Jesus is the True Messiah, the person appointed of God to be the Judge of Quick and Dead. Which Truth whosoever is firmly perswaded of, will not easily suffer himself to be overcome by the Temptations of Sin, which he knows will expose him to the final Wrath of God at That Great Day.

WHEREFORE This Faith, this Belief that Jesus is the Son of God, that he is the person by whom God will judge the World in righteousness ; This, I say, being a Matter of so great importance, a Doctrine on which the Whole of Religion depends ; the Apostle proceeds to tell us, ver. 6. that our Lord did not *barely affirm* this of himself, but came with powerful Evidence and Proof, with sufficient and undeniable Witnesses of so important a Truth : *This is he that came, saith he, by Water and Blood, even Jesus Christ.* He Came ; that is, he manifested himself to be the True Messiah, and made it appear that he was really sent of God. For Thus the Messiah is described, in the Question put by John Baptist's Disciples to our Saviour, *Matt. xi. 3. Art Thou He that should Come, or do we look for Another ?* Before his appearing, his Title was, *He that should Come* ; And after it, the Apostle here styles him accordingly, *This is he that Came.* He came ; declaring himself to be sent from God, as his Son, the Christ, the Judge of the World ; and proving the Truth of what

what he affirmed, by the evidence of *Three* concurring Testimonies, The *Water*, The *Blood*, and The *Spirit*: This is he that came by *Water* and *Blood*, even *Jesus Christ*; not by *Water* only, but by *Water* and *Blood*; And 'tis the *Spirit* that beareth Witness, because the *Spirit* is *Truth*.

THE words, not by *Water* only, but by *Water* and *Blood*; seem to be an *Allusion* to what the same Apostle *St John* records in his *Gospel*, that, when our Lord's side was pierced, forthwith there came out *Blood* and *Water*: But it seems to be an *Allusion* only; the Words in this place, having a different Sense; and referring no otherwise to those in the *Gospel*, than as the *Blood* and *Water* there mentioned are recorded as an Evidence of the Reality and Certainty of our Lord's Death: Which Death, or voluntary laying down of his Life, the same Apostle here in his *Epistle*, alledges as One Testimony of the Truth of our Lord's Doctrine, styling it the *Blood*.

By *Three* concurring Testimonies therefore, distinctly recited in the sixth verse, did our Lord prove himself to be the True Messiah. And because they are the *Three Great* and most undeniable Evidences, that gave Testimony to our Lord and to the Truth of his Doctrine; therefore the Apostle repeats them again, (as it were by way of recapitulation of the Summ of his Argument,) in the words of the Text, ver. 8. *There are Three that bear Witness, the Spirit and the Water and the Blood; and these Three agree in One*: They are One concurring or agreeing Testimony. And if we receive the Witness of Men, says he, ver. 9. (that is, if Two Witnesses were in the Law sufficient Evidence of any matter of Fact among Men;) The Witness of God is greater; this *Threefold* Testimony which God has given to the Truth of

of the Doctrine of Christ, is still *more certain and undeniable.*

THE *End and Design*, for which this Doctrine of the Gospel was preached by Christ, and thus *attested of God*; is set forth, ver. 11. *And this is the Record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this Life is in his Son*: Which words are of the same import with those of our Saviour himself in the Gospel of St John; *This is Life eternal, that they may know Thee the Only True God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

THE *Application* of the Whole, follows, ver. 18. *We know, saith the Apostle, that whosoever is Born of God, sinneth not. And why doth such a one not sin? Even because the Son of God is come, ver. 20. and hath given us an Understanding that we may know Him that is True*; that is, he hath taught us how the True God will be acceptably served and obeyed: *And we are accordingly in Him that is true, (we do accordingly so obey and serve the True God,) in his Son, that is, by or through his Son Jesus Christ: This, says he, is the True God, and eternal Life.*

II. AND now, having explained distinctly the Connection of the Text, with the whole Thread of the Apostle's Reasoning in This Chapter; I proceed in the second place to consider the *Doctrine contained particularly in the words themselves*: There are Three that bear *Witness, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood.* The Order in which they are ranked in the Sixth verse, is the true Order of nature; the *Water, the Blood, and the Spirit*; And in That order, I shall discourse upon them.

First therefore; The first of the three great Testimonies here recorded by St John, as given to the Truth of our Saviour's

Saviour's Mission and Doctrine ; is That which he files *The Water*. His Meaning is ; *That Testimony*, which God gave to our Lord in so very remarkable and illustrious a manner at the Time of his *Baptism*. Matt. iii. 16. *And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the Water ; and lo, the Heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending—upon him : and lo, a Voice from Heaven, saying, This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.* St John, in his Gospel, answerable to the Stress here laid upon it in his Epistle, enlarges very particularly upon *This Testimony* ; alledging the Account given of it by *John the Baptist* in the following manner, ch. i. 31. *I knew him not ; But that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with Water : And John bare Record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven,—and it abode upon him : And I knew him not ; But he that sent me to baptize with Water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is He which baptized with the Holy Ghost ; And I saw and bare Record, that this is the Son of God.* Again ; ch. iii. 26. *The same Testimony is referred to by the Jews, discoursing with John the Baptist, and saying ; Rabbi, be that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest Witness.* And again ; by our Saviour himself, ch. v. 33, 37. *'Ye sent unto John, and he bare Witness unto the Truth : But I receive not Testimony from Man ;—the Father himself which has sent me, hath born Witness of me.'* This therefore was the *First* great Evidence of the Truth of our Lord's mission ; the Testimony given him at his ascending out of the *Water*, when the Spirit descended visibly upon him, and there came

came a Voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.*

Secondly ; THE next that bears Witness, is what the Apostle here styles *The Blood* : That is ; our Lord's laying down his Life for a Testimony to the Truth of his Doctrine, joined with the *Circumstances* preceeding and attending his Death. He did not only preach that he was the Son of God, and by his Holy and Exemplary Life justified his integrity in what he said : But he died also, to make good his Doctrine ; and, in his Death, was attended with many the strongest circumstantial Evidences of Truth. To his *Disciples*, he frequently declared before-hand, that he should be crucified and slain, and should rise again the third day. To the *Jews*, he prophesied long before his suffering, *John* viii. 28. ' When ye have lift up the Son of Man, then ye shall know that I am He ; and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things.' To *Pilate*, he professed, *John* xviii. 37. ' To This end was I born, and for This cause came I into the World, that I should bear Witness unto the Truth.' This is what *St Paul* calls, his *Witnessing before Pontius Pilate a good confession*, *1 Tim.* vi. 13. And his steadfastness in it, caused even *Pilate* himself to testify, that the putting him to death, would be a shedding the *Blood of a just person*, *Matt.* xxvii. 24. The particular circumstances of his Death, were all of them the fulfilling of so many distinct Prophecies ; In which it had been predicted, that he should be *sold for thirty pieces of Silver* ; (*Zech.* ix. 9.) that he should be *scourged, buffeted and spit upon* ; (*Is.* l. 6.) that he should have *Gall and Vinegar* offered him to drink ; (*Pf.* lix. 21.) that they who saw him crucified, should mock at his *trusting in God* ; (*Pf.* xxiii. 8.) that the Sol-

diers should cast lots for his garments ; (Ps. xxii. 18.) that not a Bone him should be broken ; (Ps. xxxiv. 20.) and that they should look on Him whom they had pierced. (Zech. xii. 10.) Concerning all which Circumstances, and particularly this Last, of the Soldiers piercing him with a Spear, and his being really dead without having any Bone broken ; St John thus declares, ch. xix. 35. *He that saw it, bare Record ; and his Record is true, Upon Other Signs following his Death, the Centurion that watched him, bore Witness, saying, Truly This was the Son of God, Matt. xxvii. 54. After his Resurrection, (which was itself the Great Evidence of All ;) his Disciples sealed likewise the same Testimony with Their Blood : Which is therefore stiled, Rev. xvii. 6. the Blood of the Martyrs of Jesus ; That is, of those who were beheaded, ch. xx. 4. for the Witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God ; Or, as 'tis ch. vi. 9. who were slain for the Word of God, and for the Testimony which they beld. To which may be added, that even his Enemies also, who wished that his Blood might be on Them and on their children ; even Their blood also was made a Witness to the same Truth, by the Vengeance that came upon them at the destruction of Jerusalem.*

Thirdly, THE Third and Last Evidence or Witness to the Truth of our Lord's Doctrine, is the Spirit. And under This Head, are included Many particulars.

1st. THE Whole Body of Prophecies under the Old Testament : To Him give All the Prophets witness, Acts x. 43. And Rev. xix. 10. The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy : So we render the Words : But the True Rendering is ; The Spirit of Prophecy is [only] the Testimony, or the Witness, of Jesus. For which

which reason, 'tis expressly stiled by St Peter, *The Spirit of Christ which was in the Prophets.*

2dly, *THE Purity and Spiritual nature of the Doctrine itself* which he taught, and the *Innocency and Holiness of his Life* ; by means of which, he, as a *Lamb without blemish, offered himself, through the eternal Spirit, without Spot, unto God.* (1 Pet. i. 19. Heb. ix. 14.)

3dly, *THE Miracles* which he worked in his own lifetime by the *Spirit of God* : *Matt. xii. 28. If I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you* : And *John v. 36. I have greater Witness than that of John* ; For the Works which my Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me, that the Father has sent me.

4thly, *HIS Resurrection from the Dead* : Concerning which, St Peter tells us, that he was *quickned by the Spirit* ; (1 Pet. iii. 18.) And St Paul, Rom. i. 4. that he was *declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead.*

Lastly, THE Gift of the Holy Ghost ; which, according to his Promise, he sent down upon the *Apostles* after his Ascension. The *Promise* was, *John xv. 26. 'I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father ; he shall testify of me :'* And the *Accomplishment* is, *Heb. ii. 4. 'God bore them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will. So that, with great Power gave the Apostles Witness of the Resurrection of the Lord, Acts iv. 33. 'Him, saith St Peter, hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour ;—and we are his Witnesses of*

'these things; and so is also the *Holy Ghost*, whom God hath given to them that obey him,' *Acts* v. 31.

THIS therefore is the *Third* and Last Great Witness to the Truth of our Lord's Doctrine; *It is the Spirit that beareth Witness, because the Spirit is Truth.* 'Tis this great *Variety*, this manifold Evidence, of the Works of the *Spirit*; which gives the most undeniable Attestation to the Truth of Christianity. This is what St Paul calls, *the Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power*, *1 Cor.* ii. 4. *For our Gospel*, saith he, *came not unto you in Word only, but also in Power, and in the Holy Ghost*, *1 Thess.* i. 5. *Through mighty Signs and Wonders, by the Power of the Spirit of God*, *Rom.* xv. 19.

THE Inferences I shall draw from what has been said, are;

1st, IF God has given us such abundant Evidence of the Truth of Christianity, as has been above shown; then from hence it appears, how inexcusable those are, who neglect to embrace it, when proposed to them in its true and original Simplicity. In the manner *some* have mixt it up with humane inventions; with their own unintelligible doctrines, and corrupt Practices; 'tis no wonder indeed, that it has become a stumbling-block and an Offence. But as it was taught by Christ and his Apostles, in the native Purity of the Word of God; no heart of Man, that is willing to act the part of a rational Creature, can possibly withstand its Evidence and Excellency. Only they who pretend to *imbrace* it, and yet *disobey* it; are, of the two, still *more* inexcusable. If we *receive* the Witness of God, which he has given us concerning his Son; we must make Evidence of the Truth and Sincerity of our *Faith*, by the Testimony of a suitable *Practice*. We must verify and make good our *Baptism with Water*, by the Purity and *Holiness*

lines of a virtuous and Christian Life. We must be content to be *ill-used* (if at any time the Will of God be so,) and to *suffer many indignities*, for adhering to and preferring before humane inventions, the Simplicity of That Doctrine which our Lord and his Apostles attested with their *Blood*. We must take care to bring forth the Fruits of *the Spirit*, in all meekness, righteousness, sobriety and virtuous behaviour ; Otherwise the Works of *the Spirit*, the several Manifestations of the Divine Power, will be of No Benefit to us.

2dly, If the Witnesses of the Truth of Christianity recited in the Text, were a *sufficient and complete* Evidence and Attestation of That Doctrine which our Saviour himself taught ; then from hence we may learn what to think of those Evidences, which corrupt men in after-Ages have alledged in Proof of *their own additional Doctrines*. The two principal Pretences of This kind, are That of the *internal guidance of the Spirit*, and That of the *external Evidence of Miracles*. The former has been occasionally claimed, by *Enthusiasts* of all Sorts : The latter, is the great and standing Imposture of *the Church of Rome*. Concerning the former, 'tis sufficient to observe, that *Other Foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ* : And that therefore the following of the *Guidance and Direction of the Spirit of God*, is not following *vain and enthusiastick imaginations*, but adhering to That Doctrine which God at first revealed by the *inspiration of his Spirit*, and is now recorded in the *Holy Scriptures* written for our Use. Concerning the latter, namely the *Miracles* pretended to be worked in these latter Ages in the Church of *Rome* ; That which the Scripture says of them, is This : *Matt. xxiv. 24. There shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shall show great Signs*

and Wonders—Behold, I have told you before. 2 Theff. ii. 9. Whose Coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and Signs and Lying Wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the Love of Truth, (i. e. the purity and simplicity of the Gospel;) and for This cause God shall send them strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie. And, to mention but one place more, with which I shall conclude; Rev. xiii. 13. He doth great Wonders, and—deceiveth them that dwell on the Earth, by the means of those Miracles which he had Power to do. From which, and all Other Impostures and Deceits, &c.

SERMON VIII.

Of our SAVIOUR's Temptation.

[*A Sermon preached in Lent.*]

MATT. iv. 1.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.

THE History of our Saviour's Temptation, is a portion of Scripture, in which there are several *Difficulties*, that deserve particular Explication; and upon which may be made several useful *Observations*, to direct us in our Own Practice.

1. IN the first place, it may be inquired, *why* our Saviour, whom the Scripture elsewhere declares to have been tempted in all points like as we are, only without Sin; is yet by the Evangelists recorded, as having been tempted only at *This particular Time*: *Then was Jesus led up to be tempted. Then*: That is, as soon as he had been baptized. So St Mark explains it, ch. i. 11, 12. *At his Baptism there came a Voice from Heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:*
And

And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the Wilderness. The Reason is, because he *Then* began to enter upon his Office, of preaching the Doctrine of Salvation ; *That Doctrine*, by which the Works and Kingdom of the Devil, the Power and Dominion of Sin over Mankind, was to be destroyed. *Before This*, we do not read of his being Tempted : because his Life being private like that of other men, his Temptations were so likewise, Sin only always excepted. Neither, *After This*, is there any mention of his being Tempted any more ; because the Tempter being at This Time thoroughly vanquished, did not hereafter hope to prevail so much by *Tempting*, as by *Opposing and Persecuting* him. The *proper Time* of Tryal, was just after his Baptism, at the first entring into his Office. And as the Tempter might reasonably think *This* the likeliest Season, to assault him with Success ; so the Wisdom of God knew on the contrary, that it was the fittest Time for his repulsing and triumphing over the Tempter. For This reason the Text takes notice, that *Jesus was led up* of the Spirit ; that is, not by the Evil Spirit, but by the Good Spirit of God, was he led up to his Temptation. So St Luke expressly, ch. iv. 1. *Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness.* And indeed 'tis observable, that our Saviour, who before his Incarnation appeared to *Moses and the Patriarchs in the Form of God*, that is, invested with the immediate Glory and Power of his Father ; on the contrary, *all the time of his residing here upon Earth*, appeared [*καταθετός*] divested of that Glory, being made in the Likeness of Man ; and is accordingly represented through the whole Gospel, as acting and working under the Conduct of the Holy Spirit ; God having (as our Lord speaks concern-

ing

ing Himself, *John* iii. 34.) given the Spirit unto him, not by Measure.

2. IT may be inquired, why our Saviour continued so long in the solitary Retirement of a *Desert place*, and why he *Fasted* through all that Space of Forty Days. As to his *Retirement* in general, and his *Fasting* or *Humiliation* during that Retirement; the Reason of it seems to have been, that he might prepare himself beforehand by *Meditation* and *Prayer*, for the executing of that Great Office which he was about to undertake. Thus *Moses*, the Giver of the Law. Thus *Elijah*, the Head of the Antient *Prophets*. Thus *John-Baptist*, the Fore-runner of our Lord, before the day of his showing unto *Israel*, *Luke* i. 80. Thus the *Apostles* of our Lord, at the Time of their sending forth *Paul* and *Barnabas* to preach, *fasted and prayed*, *Acts* xiii. 3. And, when they first ordained *Elders* in every Church, they *prayed with Fasting*, *ch.* xiv. 23. And our Saviour, admonishing his Disciples concerning some extraordinary miraculous Gifts, with which they were to be indued; This kind, saith he, goeth not out, but by *Prayer* and *Fasting*, *Matt.* xvi. 21. In ordinary cases, 'tis to be understood by Us as a *Rule and Example* in proportion, that in undertaking any Office, and especially any Sacred Function, we be not rash and precipitate, careless, and full of worldly Thoughts and Designs; but that, withdrawing our Minds from the World, and attending seriously to the promoting of God's Glory, or the Interest of Truth and Virtue among Men, we beg the Divine Assistance to enable us, and by Meditation and Study strengthen our own Resolutions of being Diligent, and improve our Qualifications towards being more Successful, in the Performance of our Duty.

As to the *particular Space of Time* wherein our Saviour fasted, which was *forty days*; This was an Accomplishment of those Antient Types, when Moses was *with the Lord* in the Mount *forty days and forty nights*, and did neither eat bread, nor drink water, (Exod. xxxiv. 28.) and *Elijah*, (1 Kings xix. 8.) *went in the strength of the meat that he had eaten, forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the Mount of God.* Moses's Fast, was for the Sins of *Israel* in the Wilderness, Deut. ix. 18. 'I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, 'I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of 'all your Sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly 'in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to Anger.' *Elijah's* Fast, was for the Idolatry of *Israel* in the days of the Kings, 1 Kings xix. 13. 'There came a 'voice to him, saying, What dost thou here, Elijah? 'And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God 'of Hosts; because the children of *Israel* have forsaken 'thy Covenant, thrown down thine Altars, and slain 'thy Prophets with the Sword.' These Types therefore of the *Giver of the Law*, and of the *Chief of the Prophets*, our Saviour who came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, to fulfil all Legal, as well as Moral Righteousness, and to be an Expiation for the Sins of the whole World; thought fit to accomplish. And possibly even in his Own Fast also of forty days, there might still be something typical, and prophetical. For, as it was told to *Ezekiel* in his Vision, ch. iv. 6. 'Thou shalt bear the iniquity of the House of Judah 'forty days, I have appointed thee each day for a year.' And as the Prophet *Jonah* prophesied of *Nineveh*, yet *forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; (which, though in the literal sense it was deferred upon their Repentance, yet in the accounts of prophetical computation

tation it was really fulfilled, as is intimated at the conclusion of the book of *Tobit* :) so 'tis very observable, that God *suffered the Manners* of the *Jews in the Wilderness* (upon whose Account *Moses's* Fast was kept; God bore with them, I say, in the Wilderness) *forty years*, in the time of that Great *Provocation*, Acts xiii. 18. and Ps. xcv. 8, 9, 10. And from the time of our Saviour's Death to the final destruction of *Jerusalem*, the same impenitent Nation had again the same Space allowed them of forty years.

THE Use of such Observations as these, is, to show the exact *Connexion* there is, between the several prophetic *Types* made use of in Scripture, and the *Events* to which those *Types* have relation. The comparing of which one with another, is a confirmation of the Truth of the inspired Writings, and consequently of the Truth of the Revelation itself.

THE Churches in *following* Ages, long after the Apostle's times, instituted the Forty-days Fast of *Lent*, for some sort of a Resemblance or Imitation of our Saviour's Fast: But This, being not of Apostolical institution, is to be looked upon only as all Other Appointments of merely humane Authority.

3. IT may be inquired *why* our Saviour, who had Power over unclean Spirits, and could cast out Devils at his Pleasure; was yet pleased to submit himself and condescend so far, as to be *Tempted* at all by the Enemy. To this question, the Apostle gives an Answer, *Heb. ii. 14.* that our Lord being through Death *to destroy him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil*; — took therefore upon him, *not the Nature of Angels*, wherein he could not have died; but the Nature of *Men*. 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful' and

‘ and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God,
 ‘ to make reconciliation for the Sins of the people. For
 ‘ in that He himself hath suffered, being *Tempted*;
 ‘ he is able to succour Them that Are *Tempted*.’ And
 ch. iv. 15. ‘ We have not an High Priest which cannot
 ‘ be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities; but
 ‘ one who was in all points *Tempted* like as we are, yet
 ‘ without Sin.’ *Tempted*, not only by the *Great Ad-*
versary, as in the present History, whereof my Text
 is a part; but *Tempted* also by all the *usual Difficulties*
of humane Life. For so he expresses himself to his Dis-
 ciples, Luke xxii. 28. *Ye are they which have continued*
with me in my Temptations. And indeed the Design of
 his coming into the World, was not barely to *Die*; but
 in the whole Course of his *Life* also, to set an Example
 of Humility and of perfect Obedience, as well as to
 give himself a Propitiation for our Sins by his *Death*.
 For *This* reason he was *circumcised*, and became obe-
 dient in all things to the Law of *Moses*. And when he
 came to *John*’s Baptism; though he had no Sin to wash
 away by Repentance; and *John*, knowing him, would
 have forbidden him, saying, *I have need to be baptized*
of Thee, and comest thou to Me? Matt. iii. 14. yet *Je-*
sus insisted upon it, saying, *Suffer it to be so Now*;
For thus it becometh us to fulfil All Righteousness. All
Righteousness; that is, every thing which is, not only
 properly and strictly *needful in itself*; but every thing
 that is *meet*, every thing that is *decent*, every thing that
 is *regular*, *exemplary*, or of good report.

4. It may be inquired, (and This is one of the greatest
 Difficulties of all,) *why* the Tempter *would* at all assault
 our Lord, or what Advantage he could possibly hope to
 gain over him. Was it possible that he could think to
 defeat the Counsel of God, or disappoint the Design of
 his

his sending the Messiah into the World? To This, it may be replied, 1st, That as wicked men perpetually attempt *vain, unreasonable, and absurd* things; so wicked Spirits likewise, deserted of God, and forsaken of all Goodness and True Understanding, may well be supposed to attempt things no less *unreasonable and absurd*. That Evil Spirits should at any time have hoped to prevail against the Almighty by *Power and Force*, as Some have supposed; is indeed too absurd to be imagined. But that they should rebel against the *Counsel and Will* of God, and endeavour maliciously to overthrow *his Kingdom of Righteousness*; this is no more than what wicked men, in a lower degree, are perpetually doing. But 2^{dly}, It may be considered further, that possibly the Tempter was not yet *sure*, whether our Lord was indeed the *Messiah* or no. His words, *If thou be the Son of God*, seem to express his *uncertainty* concerning that matter. And there are several other things taken notice of in Scripture, the observing of which will make This seem less improbable. The Evangelists tell us, that the Devil *entred into Judas*, and put it in his Heart to betray his Master. By This it appears, that the Tempter did not even Then know, that the Salvation of Men was to be accomplished by the shedding of the Blood of Christ; seeing he hoped to put an End to the Doctrine of Christ, by destroying his Life. And This will be the less to be wondered at, if we consider what is declared in Scripture even concerning good *Angels themselves*, who *always behold the Face of our Father which is in Heaven*. 1 Pet. i. 11. The Antient *Prophets*, says the Apostle, ‘searched What, and what manner of Time, ‘the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, ‘when it testified beforehand the Sufferings of Christ, ‘and the Glory that should follow. Unto whom it was

‘vealed, that not unto themselves, but unto Us they
 ‘did minister the things which are now reported unto
 ‘you by Them that have preached the Gospel unto
 ‘you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.
 ‘Which things, the *Angels* desire to look into.’ Not
 only Evil *Spirits* understood not, what the Prophets
 had foretold concerning the Sufferings of Christ, and the
 Glory that should follow ; but even *Good Angels* them-
 selves, St *Peter* tells us, were *desirous to look into* Those
 things. And St *Paul* carries this matter still further,
Eph. iii. 9. ‘To preach, *saith he*, the unsearchable
 ‘Riches of Christ ; and to make all men see what is
 ‘the Fellowship of the Mystery, which from the Be-
 ‘ginning of the World, hath been hid in God, who
 ‘created all things by Jesus Christ ; To the intent that
 ‘Now unto the Principalities and Powers in *heavenly*
 ‘places, might be known by the Church the manifold
 ‘Wisdom of God.’ By the *Church* ; that is, by the
 Dispensations of God’s Providence towards his univer-
 sal Church, by the Events accomplishing antient *Types*
 and *Mysteries* ; and by the clear fulfilling of obscure
Prophecies ; by These is the Wisdom of God, and the
 manifold Beauty of the Divine Counsels, made known
 not to Men only, but to *Angels* also. And This per-
 haps is the true meaning of That obscure Text, *1 Tim.*
 iii. 16. The *Mystery* * of *Godliness*, (or God,) * *ma-*
nifest in the Flesh, was seen of *Angels* : Seen, not in the
 literal Sense ; for that was no mystery ; But under-
 stood, apprehended, made plain, to the *Angels* ; who
 were before, in That sense, *desirous to look into it*.
 To mention but One place more : There is a very re-
 markable expression in the Book of *Tobit*, ch. vi. 17.

* *This is the old and true Reading.*

where

where the Angel *Raphael*, one of the seven Spirits that are described as going in and out before the Throne of God, is introduced thus speaking: *Moreover, I suppose, says he, (he does not speak as with certain knowledge, but, I suppose, says he,) that she shall bear thee children.* He who considers These, and the like expressions of Scripture; will not perhaps think *Evil* Spirits to be Creatures of such extensive Capacity, but that the Tempter might very well be *uncertain* whether our Saviour was the promised *Messiah* or no, at the Time of his presuming to tempt him as in the Text. But 3dly, Supposing the Tempter *did* know our Lord to be the promised *Messiah*, at the Time of his tempting him; yet still it was by no means impossible for the Great Deceiver to suppose, that as, by seducing the *First Adam*, he had excluded Mankind out of That Paradise which God had planted for them; so by endeavouring to make *some* impression or other upon the *Second Adam*, he might prevent men from being restored to Paradise again; and so a *second time* defeat the *Counsel of God*. Defeat the *Counsel of God*; That is, *not* prevent any thing that the Almighty had *resolved absolutely* to accomplish: For, in That Sense, nothing can *resist* his *Will*, nothing can *oppose* his *Power*: But the Enemy *may* oppose *such* Counsels or Designs of God for the Salvation of Mankind, as are *conditional* only, and appointed to depend upon the Behaviour of *Others*: *Such* Counsels of God, as even *Men* are at liberty by their Perverseness and Obstinacy to disappoint. As when the Evangelist tells us, St *Luke* i. 30. that the *Pharisees and Lawyers* rejected the *Counsel of God against themselves*: That is; *Against* their own Interest, *against* their own both Temporal and Eternal Welfare, they rejected the gracious Offers of the divine Mercy.

Such Counsels of God as these, 'tis no wonder that He whose Works and Kingdom our Lord came to destroy, should endeavour to oppose. Nor is it at all impossible, that the Design of God in sending the *Messiah* into the World, might seem to the Tempter to be of the same Nature; to be *conditional* likewise. For as *all the Threatnings* of God, even those which in the *manner of Expression* are most *peremptory and absolute*, yet in reality must always be understood to be *conditional*, and to include a tacit *exception* upon the case of Repentance and Reformation; (as is evident in the Instance of *Jonah's* Prophecy against *Nineveh*; and as is declared in general by the Prophet *Jeremy*, ch. xviii. 7. 'At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If That Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them:)' As (I say) all the *Threatnings* of God are thus undoubtedly conditional, so likewise all the *Promises* of God to Mankind, however *peremptory and absolute* they may seem in the prophetic Expressions of Scripture, may yet possibly be supposed to be in reality *conditional* also. The Nation of the *Jews* at This day, notwithstanding the most *express and determinate Predictions* in the Old Testament, not only concerning the Coming of the *Messiah*, but even concerning the *precise Time and Manner of his Coming*, in Terms the most *positive and absolute* that can be; yet are universally of Opinion, that for the Sins of That people, his Coming has been put off beyond the Time limited by the Prophets above seventeen hundred years. Well therefore might the Tempter apprehend, by the same manner of Reasoning, even *after* the *Messiah* had begun to appear in the *Flesh*, that not-

with-

withstanding the plain Predictions concerning the Salvation of Mankind by him, yet possibly even in all *Those* Promises there might be included such *tacit Conditions*, as that either by Tempting Christ himself, or his Followers the Apostles, or by exciting Wicked men to oppose and withstand Him and his Doctrine, he might at least in *some measure* prevent the Effect of his Coming, and hinder (at least in *great part*) the Salvation of Men.

THUS have I briefly endeavoured to give Some Answer to That difficult Inquiry, *why* the Tempter would at all assault our Lord ; what Advantage he could possibly hope to gain over him ; and how, and in what degree, he could think it possible to defeat the Counsel of God, and to disappoint the Design of his sending the Messiah into the World.

5. *Fifibly and Lastly* ; since we read no more in the Gospels, of Christ's being Tempted after This ; it may be inquired in the Last place, *how* and in *what Sense* it is said by St Luke, at the Conclusion of This History of our Lord's Temptation, ch. iv. 13. that the Tempter *departed from him, only* for a Season. The words, *for a Season*, seem to imply, as if after some Interval he *returned to tempt him again*. Which since we no where read that he attempted any more, in any *such* way of Temptation as is recorded in the Text ; 'tis therefore probable that the Evangelist's Meaning was This ; that the Tempter having failed of Success in his *present* Method, departed from our Lord for a Time, intending *hereafter* to assault him after *Another* manner. That is to say : Finding there was *no possibility* of making any impression upon him by *Fraud*, he resolved for the future to *withstand* his Doctrine by *Opposition and Force* : And because there was *no room* for his Suggestions to

take any place, upon *Christ himself*; the only remaining way, was to stir up against him the Hatred of profane *Men*; and try, by making *Others* his Instruments, to put a Stop by *Their* Malice to That Doctrine, which *He himself* by his *own* Temptations could not prevent from being preached. *After a Season* therefore, according to the intimation *St Luke* gives us, he returned again: And having prevailed upon *Judas* to betray him, and upon the *Pharisees* to incourage the Baseness of the Betrayer, and upon *Pilate* to put him to Death upon their false Accusation; he might very well think, that by the Success of this *last* Attempt, he had made sufficient Amends for his Failure in the *first*. By which Means, not only wicked *Men*, by whose hands our Lord was crucified and slain (*Acts ii. 23.*) but even the Great Deceiver Himself, became an Instrument in the hand of Providence, to bring about, according to the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledge of God, the Salvation of the World. ‘O the depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!’ (*Rom. xi. 33.*) The Particulars of this last great Transaction, are thus recorded in the Gospel: Our Saviour, in his last Discourse with his Disciples, a little before his Passion, gives them Notice of their great Temptation approaching; *John xiv. 30.* *The Prince of this World*, saith he, *cometh, and bath nothing in me.* The first Effect of this his coming, is expressed, *John xiii. 2.* ‘The Devil having now put it into the Heart of *Judas Iscariot*, *Simon's Son*, to betray him:’ And *Luke xxii. 3.* ‘Then entred Satan into *Judas surnamed Iscariot*, being of the number of the twelve.’ This Success of the Tempter, was upon *Judas only*; But Attempts were made, upon the rest of the

the Disciples likewise: *Luke xxii. 31.* 'The Lord said, 'Simon, Simon; behold *Satan* hath desired to have 'you, that he may sift you as wheat; But I have 'prayed for thee, that thy Faith fail not: 'And unto all the Disciples, ver. 40. *Pray*, saith he, *that ye enter not into Temptation*: and again ver. 46. *Rise, and pray, lest ye enter into Temptation.* Now at the same time that one of his Disciples was thus moved to *betray* him, and the rest afraid to acknowledge him, and tempted to *deny* him; the *Malice and Cruelty* of his Enemies, his Enemies both *visible* and *invisible*, wicked Men and wicked Spirits, was stirred up against him to such a degree, that he Thus speaks concerning *Himself*, *John xii. 27.* 'Now is my Soul troubled, and what shall I 'say? Father, save me from this Hour: and concern- 'ing his Enemies, *Luke xxii. 53.* This is your Hour, 'and the Power of Darknes.' The *Effect* was, that he was delivered into the Hands of Wicked men, to be crucified and slain. And when the *Enemy of man's Sal- vation*, and the *Enemies of their own Salvation*, thought they had thus entirely put an End to the Doctrine of Christ by his Death; the *Wisdom of God*, on the con- trary, brought it to pass, (which was the *Mystery* hid from the Foundation of the World,) that by *this very means*, even *through Death*, he destroyed Him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil: (*Heb. ii. 14.*) According to That Prediction of his own, spoken just before his Passion, but not understood till after his Re- surrection, *John xii. 31.* 'Now is the Judgment of this World, now shall the Prince of this World be cast out: 'And ch. xvi. 11. 'Of Judgment, because the Prince of this World is judged.

THE only Observation I shall add further upon This Head is, that whereas it is affirmed in This History, that

that Satan *entred into Judas*, and *put it in his Heart to betray his Master*; 'tis not to be understood, either in *Judas's*, or in any other Wicked man's case, that the *Devil's tempting them* is any manner of Excuse or Extenuation of their Sin. For the Devil can *but suggest*, even as Wicked men do one to another. And, *being Tempted*, or having Evil suggested to them, is no Sin, Sin, consists wholly in the *Consent of the Will*, approving and putting in practice the Evil suggested. Over which *Consent of the Will*, the Devil has no Power; but 'tis owing entirely to the *Wickedness of the man's own Heart*, *choosing to do the Evil which it ought to have refused*. And therefore the Question is put by St Peter to *Ananias*, (Acts v. 3.) by way of aggravation and severe *Reproof* of his Crime; *why hath Satan filled thine Heart?* that is, what Excuse can you have, for complying with so vile a Temptation of the Devil, which you ought to have rejected with all Abhorrence?

BUT concerning This, (which is a practical Inference from the whole,) I shall have occasion to speak further, in the following Discourse,

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Of our SAVIOUR'S Temptation.

[*A Sermon Preached in Lent.*]

MATT. iv. 1.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to be Tempted of the Devil.

IN discoursing upon the Account the Scripture gives us of our Saviour's Temptation, I proposed 1st to consider the several *Difficulties*, which, in That portion of the Gospel-History, may seem to want more particular Explication; and 2^{dly}, to deduce from thence such *Observations*, as may be useful to direct us in our own Practice.

I. IN the *First* place, the *Difficulties*, which, in the History of our Saviour's Temptation, seemed most necessary to be explained, I have already considered particularly in a foregoing Discourse; And have shown distinctly, 1st, why our Saviour, whom the Scripture elsewhere declares to have been tempted in all points like as We are, only without Sin; is yet by the Evangelists recorded, as having been tempted only at this particular Time.

Time. 2dly, *why* our Saviour continued so long in the solitary Retirement of a *Desert place*, and why he *Fasted* thro' all that Space of Forty days. 3dly, *why* our Lord, who had Power over unclean Spirits, and could cast out Devils at his Pleasure; was yet pleased to submit himself and condescend so far, as to be *Tempted* by the Enemy. 4thly, *why* the Tempter would at all assault our Lord, or what Advantage he could possibly hope to gain over him. 5thly and *Lastly*, *how* and in *what Sense*, since we read no more in the Gospels, of Christ's being tempted after This; it is yet said by St *Luke*, at the Conclusion of this History of our Lord's Temptation, and the Tempter departed from him, only for a Season.

THESE several Questions, naturally arising in the mind of any one who carefully reads this portion of the Gospel-History; I have endeavoured to give particular and distinct Answers to them, in the foregoing Discourse. I am now in the

II. *Second place*, to deduce from this History of our Lord's Temptation, such *Inferences* or *Observations*, as may be useful to direct us in our *own Practice*. And

1st, WE have from hence an intimation given us, that the Devil is always ready to Tempt men to Sin. As the Good Spirit of God, is always willing to assist those who sincerely desire to be religious; and the *Angels* are with cheerfulness sent forth to minister, to those who shall be Heirs of Salvation: so the Scripture every where represents the *Evil One*, as delighting and watching to entice men into Sin. (1 *Pet.* v. 8.) Be sober, 'be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a 'roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may 'devour.' Again, *Eph.* vi. 11, 12. 'Put on the 'whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand 'against

‘against the Wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of This World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places.’ And ch. ii. 2. ‘According to the Course of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that Now worketh in the children of Disobedience.’ If it be here inquired, for what reason wicked Spirits tempt men to Sin, and what End they can propose in so doing; the most probable Answer is, that they do it for the very same reasons, as wicked men tempt and seduce one another. Partly, as esteeming it a sort of *Apology* or *Excuse* for *Themselves*, if they can draw *Others* into the like Condemnation: and partly as being moved with *Envy*, that Others should enjoy That Happiness which they themselves have lost; and bating those, whose manners and dispositions are contrary to their own. Concerning wicked Men, the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* thus describes the Temper I am speaking of; ch. ii. 12. ‘Let us lie in wait for the righteous; because he is not for our Turn, and he is clean contrary to our Doings;—He is grievous unto us, even to behold; for his Life is not like other mens, his ways are of another Fashion.’ And concerning evil *Spirits*, ver. 24. ‘Through *Envy* of the Devil, came Death into the World; and they that hold of his side, do find it.’ Nevertheless; though the Scriptures do indeed thus teach us, that the Devil is always ready to *Tempt* men to Sin; yet ’tis Always carefully to be observed, that he can do nothing more but *Tempt* us. He has no Power over our Persons, or our Wills. He can only set before us *Baits* and *Allurements*; but we cannot be hurt by them, except we yield to them and choose them. The Treachery and Corrupt-

ness

ness of our own Hearts within, is much more dangerous, than all the Assaults of the Enemy from without. Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, St Jam. i. 13. that is, let no man plead as an Excuse for his Sin, that God permitted the Devil to tempt him into it. (For that This is the meaning of the Phrase, tempted of God ; appears plainly from 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. compared with 1 Chron. xxi. 1. In one of which places, 'tis said, the Lord moved David to number Israel and Judah ; and in the other, that Satan provoked David to number Israel.) Let no man (says the Apostle,) plead as an Excuse for his Sin, that God permitted the Evil One to tempt him into it. For God, as he cannot himself be tempted with evil, so neither tempteth he any man ; neither doth he permit the Devil to tempt any one further, than by laying before him such Allurements, as 'tis in the person's Power, and 'tis his Duty, and 'tis the proper Trial and Exercise of his Virtue, to resist. But every man is then, and then only, tempted ; then only, effectually and sinfully, tempted ; when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed. The Enemy of mens Salvation can do nothing more, but only entice the Covetous with Hopes of Gain, puff up the Ambitious with Expectation of Honour, allure the voluptuous with Prospects of Pleasure. Where the Mind is not under the Power of any of these corrupt Affections, the Tempter finding nothing in it, (as the Scripture-expression is, John xiv. 30.) his Temptations can take no hold, and his Power is at an End. Resist the Devil, says the Apostle, and he will flee from you. Take heed only that your own Heart be sincere, sincere in the Pursuit of Truth and Virtue ; and all the fiery darts of the wicked One will in course be quenched. If we do not, by our own Perverseness, grieve and drive from us the
good

good Spirit of God ; (Ecclus. xv. 17.) greater is He that is in Us, than He that is in the World. God, saith the Son of Sirach, has set before man Life and Death ; and whether him liketh, shall be given him. The good Spirit is equally willing, and more able to help us, than the Evil one can be to hurt us. In vain therefore do wicked men hope to extenuate their own Crimes, by alledging that they were tempted by the Devil. For the Scripture never mentions it as an *Excuse*, but on the contrary as an *Aggravation* of a Fault, when 'tis of such a nature as may well be supposed to have been suggested by the *Evil One*, and for *That* reason ought above all things to have been carefully avoided. Why has Satan filled thine Heart, said St Peter to Ananias, Acts v. 3 ? by way of more severe Reproof, for his presumption in attempting to deceive the Holy Spirit, wherewith God had inspired the Apostles. Nor indeed is it at all impossible, but that mens wicked deeds may sometimes rightly be ascribed to the Devil, even when perhaps they proceed only from the corruption of their own Hearts, and not from any immediate suggestion of evil Spirits. For, as it is agreeable to the Style of Scripture, and to the Reason of Things, to ascribe every thing that is Good to God ; because he is the original Author of the Powers by which all Good is done ; and whatever Good is done, is in obedience to His Commands, and agreeable to his Nature and Will : So every Wicked thing that is done, may in a proportionate sense be ascribed to the Devil ; because He is the Head, and the Beginner and Encourager of Evil ; and whatever Evil is done, is in imitation of him, and agreeable to him.

2dly, THE 2d Observation I would draw from the History of our Lord's Temptation, is, that we are hereby taught, that no Person whatsoever is so Great or Good,

as to be exempt from Temptation. If the *Captain of our Salvation* was himself *made perfect by Suffering*, let no man think himself so Good, as not to deserve Chastisement at the hand of God. If *Christ himself* was in all points tempted like as *We are*, let no man think himself so perfect, as to be above the Danger and the Fear of Temptation. We have great reason, as the Apostle admonishes, *Heb. ii. 1. to give earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* For the Deceitfulness of Sin is Great, and the Tempter is always watchful to seduce us, and the Heart of man is apt to grow negligent. So that even the Best Christians are by St Paul admonished, to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling.* Let him that *thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall,* 1 Cor. x. 12. and Rom. xi. 20. *Thou standest by Faith; be not high-minded, but fear.*

3dly, FROM the consideration of the Time of our Saviour's being tempted, which was *immediately after his Baptism*; we are instructed, that when men first set about the Practice of Religion, they are then reasonably to expect the greatest Difficulties in their Duty. *Ecclus. ii. 1. My Son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation.* The Life of a Christian, is in Scripture compared to a State of *Warfare*; wherein he that goeth out to Battel, ought well to consider, before his setting out, what is the Strength of the Enemy that cometh against him. Whoever will lead a religious life; must begin with expecting, to find difficulty in subduing *his own* vitious Passions, and to find opposition from the course of a corrupt and debauched *World.* No man, saith St Paul, *should be moved by these Afflictions; for, yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto:* (1 Thess. iii. 3.) *Yea, and All that will live godly in Christ*

Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution. (2 Tim. iii. 12.) For This reason, the Scripture frequently uses the Phrase of *Overcoming*, to express a Christian's Perseverance in the Love of Truth and Virtue. He must be *Tempted with Allurements*, and *terrified with Dangers*; and then, if he *Overcometh*, saith our Saviour, he *shall inherit all things*. The sooner a man begins the Practice of true religion, the *fewer* evil Habits and the *less* strong vicious inclinations will he have to struggle with from *within*. And when he has once got above the *Allurements of inward Temptation*, he will with much greater Advantage be able to withstand the *Force of Persecution from abroad*. When our Saviour had entirely repulsed the first Assaults of sensual Pleasure and Ambition; the Tempter, says the Text, *departed from him, and Angels came and ministered unto him*. Thus, whosoever in the practice of religion, steddily resists the *first* temptations to Vice, and suffers not himself to be corrupted with any Evil Habits; shall, after That, more easily *keep himself*, and *That wicked One toucheth him not*. *Wisdom*, that is, *Virtue*, is *glorious*, saith the Author of the book of *Wisdom*, ch. vi. 12. and *never fadeth away*:—*Who so seeketh her early, shall have no great Trouble, for he shall find her sitting at his Doors*.

4^{thly}, FROM the following Expression in the Text, that *Jesus being led by the Spirit*, (Mat. iv. 1.) or being *full of the Holy Ghost*, (Luke iv. 1.) went up into the Wilderness to be Tempted of the Devil; we may learn, that *Temptation to Sin* is not at all an *Argument of God's Displeasure*, but only a *Trial of us appointed by his wise Providence*. 'Tis, in the Nature of things, a *necessary and essential* condition of a *Probation-state*, that there should be some Trial of mens Virtue. And,

in *This* sense, the Scripture scruples not to affirm, that *God himself* tempts men. *Gen. xxii. 1. After these things God did tempt, that is, did try Abraham.* And *Deut. viii. 2. 'God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to 'prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether 'thou wouldst keep his Commandments or no;'* and suffered false Prophets, *ch. xiii. 3,* that he might know 'whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart, 'and with all your Soul.' The meaning is; not, that in *These* cases God does not *know before*, how men will behave themselves; but that They who *have in them* a true Root of Virtue, may *actually* bring forth the Fruit of it; may be *exercised*, may be *approved*, may be *made manifest*, to the *World* here; and to men and Angels hereafter, and may be, *in themselves*, improved, *established*, and *fitted* for the State of Heaven. The *Trial of our Faith*, (saith the Apostle,) *worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope.* (*Jam. i. 3. Rom. v. 4.*) For *This* Reason, we are exhorted, *not to faint*, nor to be *cast down* under Temptations; nor to *think it strange* concerning the *fiery trials* that are to try us. Nay, on the contrary, we are encouraged even to *rejoice* under manifold Temptations; (*1 Pet. i. 5.*) to call *the man* Blessed, that *endureth temptation*, (*Jam. i. 12.*) to *glory in tribulations*, (*Rom. v. 3.*) to *count it all joy*, when we fall into divers temptations, (*Jam. i. 2.*) Considering, that *when we are tried*, we shall receive the *Crown of Life*, (*ver. 12.*) and that *the Trial of our Faith*, is much more pretious than of *Gold* that *perisheth*, (*1 Pet. i. 7.*) For, when he has tried us (as Holy *Jab* expresses it,) we shall come forth as *Gold*, *ch. xxiii. 10.* And the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, *ch. iii. 5.* God, saith he, proved 'the 'Souls of the righteous, and found them worthy 'for himself; As *Gold* in the furnace hath he tried 'them,

* them, and received them as a burnt-offering: And
* in the Time of their visitation (*that is, at the day of*
* judgment;) they shall shine, and run too and fro like
* Sparks among the Stubble; They shall judge the Na-
* tions, and have Dominion over the people, and their
* Lord shall reign for ever.'

NEVERTHELESS, 'tis here carefully to be observed,
that all the things which the Scripture speaks in *This man-
ner* concerning Temptations and our rejoicing under them,
are to be understood *only* of Temptations either *already*
past and overcome; or else of such, as we have *very*
good ground of assurance, that, by the grace of God,
they shall be overcome. For otherwise, as to *Tempta-
tions in general*, Temptations *unexperienced*, and of
which we know the *Danger* but *not the Success*; con-
cerning *These*, the Direction the Scripture gives us, is,
on the contrary, that we may *lawfully*, nay, that 'tis
our Duty to pray *against them*, and endeavour to *avoid*
them. Our Saviour, who *knew what was in Man*,
thus exhorts his Disciples, *Mar. xiv. 38. Watch and*
pray, lest ye enter into Temptation: and himself prays,
*not for his own Sake, but as an Example to Us; Fa-
ther, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me. Our*
Nature is frail, our Passions strong, our Wills biassed;
and our security, generally speaking, consists much more
certainly in *escaping* great Temptations, than in *con-
quering* them. For This reason, our Lord directed his
Followers, when they were *Persecuted in one City*, to
fly unto another. Which they who refused to do, led
themselves into Temptation, and tempted God: Put-
ting themselves upon an Expectation of an extraordinary
Assistance, where God had not given any Promise of af-
fording it. For where God *calls* us to a Trial, he *will*
enable us to go thro' it; but there is *no Assurance* of

such Assistance to the Presumptuous. 'Tis not lawful therefore, for Men to go of themselves, and *throw themselves* into Temptation ; and we are taught to *pray* moreover, that God also, in his good Providence, would *not lead us into it*. This Phrase, of God's leading *men into Temptation*, 'tis evident, must be understood according to the *Analogy* of Scripture-language : which, because Nothing can come to pass without God's permission, does therefore usually, in acknowledgment of the Supreme superintendency of Divine Providence over all Events, ascribe *every thing* figuratively to God. As when God is said to have *delivered* a man, who is slain by chance, into the hand of his Neighbour ; to have *moved* David, by means of Satan's Temptations, to number *Israel* and *Judah* ; to have *bardened Pharaoh's* heart ; to have *blinded the Eyes*, and *made fat*, or *stupid*, the heart of the people ; to have *sent forth* a lying Spirit among *Ahab's* Prophets ; to have *bardened the Spirit* of *Sidon* King of *Heshbon*, and *made his heart obstinate* ; to have *bardened the Nations*, to come against *Israel* to battle, that *he might destroy them utterly* ; to have *put* it in the Hearts of Evil Princes, to give their Kingdom unto the Beast or False Prophet ; to *send* upon men a *strong Delusion* ; and, in the phrase we are now speaking of, to lead *men into Temptation*. 'Tis plain, in *all* these Expressions, the intention is not to affirm, (except perhaps in some *judicial* cases,) that God, *actually* and *efficiently*, does these things ; but only, that in the course of his All-wise Providence, he justly *permits* them to come to pass. Wherefore, when our Saviour teaches us to pray, that God would not lead *us into Temptation* ; the meaning is, that he would be pleased so to order and direct things by his All-wise Providence in This Probation-state, as not to suffer us to

be

' be tempted above what we are able, *but that he would*
' with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that
' we may be able to bear it.' And particularly, that
he would not *judicially, and in anger*, give us up and leave
us to the Power of Temptation, and to the Seduce-
ments of the Evil One; as he did *Pharaoh and Abab,*
and *Judas*, and the *Israelites in the Wilderness*, when
(as the Psalmist expresses it) ' he gave them up unto
' their own Hearts Lusts, and let them follow their
' own Imaginations.' But that, on the contrary, he
would either by his *preventing Mercy*, keep us from the
Hour of Temptation, Rev. iii. 10. or, by his gracious
Support, *deliver us out of it*, 2 Pet. ii. 9.

5thly. FROM what St Luke records, at the Conclu-
sion of this History of our Lord's Temptation, that the
Tempter departed from him *only for a Season*; we may
observe, that though at the first Entrance into the
course of a religious Life, the greatest Difficulties and
Temptations are generally to be expected; and when
Once those are clearly overcome, the *ways of Virtue*
usually become *Pleasantness*, and her *Paths Peace*; yet
men ought *never* to look upon themselves as *secure*,
from the Returns of Temptation; but that the Evil
One may again assault them under different Forms and
Shapes, to seduce them into different kinds of Sins;
grounding Temptations, *perhaps*, even upon their *Se-
curity itself*. Wherefore, ' we ought (*says the Apostle*)
' to give the more earnest heed to the things which we
' have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip,'
Heb. ii. 1. For, many Wise and Good Resolutions,
made with great Sincerity and right Intention, have
through Negligence after some time, and want of se-
rious recollection, failed of their Effect. ' Watch ye
' therefore, and be ready *Always*; for ye know not
' what

'what hour your Lord doth come: Blessed (*says our Saviour*) is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing,' *Matt. xxiv. 46.*

Lastly ; FROM the *Particulars* of our Saviour's Temptation, we may observe the *several principal Ways* by which the Tempter assaults men, and what are the most *proper Means* of *resisting* each Temptation.

HIS *first* Temptation, was founded upon *bodily and temporal Wants* : When he *was an hungred*, the Tempter said ; ' If thou be the Son of God, command that these Stones be made Bread.' His meaning was ; ' If you are the Beloved of God, do not submit to undergo any Hardships ; but *insist* with God, that he *show* his Love to you, by supporting you even miraculously.' *Want*, is the great Temptation to *murmuring* against God : And therefore *Satan* is represented, *Job i. 11.* as thus pleading with God against *Job* ; ' Put forth *shine* hand now, and *touch* all that he hath, and he *will* curse thee to thy face.' And the Prayer of *Agur* is for this reason given us as an example, *Prov. xxx. 8.* *Give me not poverty, — lest I take the Name of my God in vain.* The *proper* Preservative against *This* Temptation, our Saviour teaches us in his Reply ; ' Man shall not live by Bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.' We must at all times depend upon the Protection of Providence ; and consider, that as in the Time of *Plenty*, we are supported *not* by the *things themselves* which we enjoy, but by the *Blessing of God* which alone enables them to support us ; so, in the Time of *Want*, the same Providence, if he thinks fit, and sees that it will promote our eternal Interest, can still always find proper Means of preserving us.

THE *Second* Temptation offered to our Lord, was; *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down*; down from a pinnacle of the Temple; 'For it is written, he shall give his Angels Charge concerning thee,—lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a Stone.' To *This* Temptation, our Lord replies, that there being a Commandment given in the Law, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*; 'tis therefore *not lawful* for any man to throw himself needlessly into danger, merely to try whether Providence will therein protect him or no. We may rely upon God, that he will give his Angels Charge over us, in all Dangers into which his Providence leads us; but no man ought to tempt God, by running wilfully any presumptuous hazards.

THE Use therefore of *This* part of the History of our Lord's Temptation, may be to warn us against *Two* or *Three* very dangerous Seducements of *This* kind. *One* is, a presumptuous confidence or vain security, relying upon groundless Notions of *Predestination*, and of God's particular Favour to us; or founded upon a False Application of conditional Promises, as if they were absolute; *Cast thyself down*, For, it is written, *he shall give his Angels Charge concerning thee*.

ANOTHER dangerous Temptation which we are here likewise warned of; a Temptation, contrary at first Sight to That now-mentioned, and yet in reality leading into the same Snare; is *Distrust of God*. Such a Distrust, as the Israelites in the Wilderness were guilty of, when they said; *He smote the stony rock indeed, that the Waters—flowed withal*; but can he give Bread also, or provide Flesh for his People? Ps. lxxviii. 21. He hath preserved thee indeed in Other Dangers; but *Cast thyself down from Hence*, and, if he has a Favour to thee, will he preserve thee *Then*? When God has
given

given men *sufficient* evidence of any Truth ; to be still dissatisfied, and continually requiring *Other Signs*, in *Tempting of God*. Thus the *Jews in the Wilderness*, (Ps. xcv. 9.) tho' they saw God's works with their own eyes, yet continued to tempt him *ten times*, Num. xiv. 22. Thus the Pharisees, after the *Voice from Heaven* at our Saviour's Baptism, and after many other miraculous works, yet still desired of him a *Sign from Heaven*, Matt. xvi. 1. Thus, after the Proof given to St Peter, of God's receiving the *Gentiles* into the Gospel-covenant ; he calls it *tempting of God*, Acts xv. 10. to endeavour to put upon the necks of the Disciples the yoke of the Ceremonial Law. Thus, after the Proofs God has given of his *existence*, by the works of Nature ; and of his *Will*, by the Revelation of the Gospel ; to call for more proofs, is a *tempting of God*.

THE *Third and Last* Temptation offered to our Lord, was *Worldly Power, Glory, and Interest* : *All these Kingdoms will I give thee*, and the *Glory of them*, if thou wilt fall down and worship Me. The Greatest of all Temptations, is *Riches, Honour, and Power*. These are the great Incentives, to *Luxury, Pride, and Tyranny*. The Prosperity of Fools, destroys them, Prov. i. 32. And, *Man being in Honour*, saith the Psalmist, *has no Understanding* ; (Ps. xlix. 20.) that is, is very apt to forget Himself, and his Duty. ' They that will be ' rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into ' many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown men in ' destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 9. Inasmuch that our Saviour declares, Matt. xix. 23. *that a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* : *Hardly* ; that is, not that Riches themselves are any Fault, but because of the numerous Temptations they

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accidentally lead men into, in a vitious and corrupt World.

THE *Answer* our Lord makes the Tempter upon this Last Trial ; *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him Only shalt thou serve* ; teaches us, that we must prefer before all things, the Service of God, and the Practice of true Religion : being always ready to reject, whatever shall come in competition with our Duty ; even the *whole World*, if offered to us at the purchase of *Sin*. If we be found of *This* disposition ; Lovers of Truth, and Doers of Righteousness ; the *Tempter* will depart from us, as he did from our Lord ; and *Angels* will come, and minister unto us ; and the *Spirit of God* will preserve and guide us unto eternal Life.

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S E R M O N X.

The Shortness and Vanity of Humane Life.

[Preached in Lent.]

JOB V. 6, 7.

*Although Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust,
neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground;
yet Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks
fly upward.*

TH E R E is no Book in the Old Testament, that has in it greater and fuller Acknowledgments, of the Glory and Power of God; nobler and more lively descriptions, of the Works of Creation and Providence; more moving and affectionate Declarations, of the Shortness and Vanity of Humane Life, and the Transitoriness of all worldly Injoyments; frequenter and more explicit Expressions of all the moral obligations of Religion, in their highest Improvement, in their most refined and exalted Sense; clearer and plainer Significations, of the Hope of the best and wisest men,

VOL. VI. O in

in antient Ages, concerning a Resurrection to a future Life ; and of their trust and reliance upon God, even after he had given them over unto Death ; than are to be met with, in this eloquent Book of *Job*.

BUT that which is *more particularly* the Design and Subject of the whole Book, is to represent to us the Character and Example, of a Man perfect in his generation, and of unspotted Integrity, a Man that feared God and eschewed Evil ; whose Strength God was pleased to try with one of the greatest Calamities that is ever recorded to have fallen on any of the Sons of men ; Under which, his behaviour was such, that in all that severe tryal *he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly* ; nor suffered his Integrity to depart from him till he died ; But he perpetually appealed from the false Opinion of *men*, to the unerring Judgment of *God* ; and vindicated, in the whole course of his affliction, the Sovereignty and Dominion of God, his Supreme Authority and Right over his creatures, to Try *them* in what manner he thought fit : Maintaining to the last, (*against* the Opinion of all his Friends,) that even that great and unparallelled affliction, which God was pleased to lay upon him in so singular and unexampled a manner, was by no means an Evidence of his being wicked and forsaken of God ; but an Effect of the Divine Power and Providence which governs the World, and brings about his own Designs, by Wise, though oft-times, (for the present) secret and inscrutable Methods : And declaring his resolution to preserve his Confidence and Reliance upon God, even beyond the Grave itself ; Even *though he slay me, saith he, yet will I trust in him : For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that my Eyes shall behold him ; whom I shall see for myself, and not another.*

THE chapter, out of which the words of my Text are taken, is part of the Reply of *Eliphaz* to that mournful Lamentation of *Job*, wherein he curses the day of his Birth, and wishes to have had his Affliction prevented by Death. In which Reply of his to *Job*, he erroneously supposes, that, because God frequently punishes the Wicked with severe Judgments in this World, therefore great Afflictions are a certain Evidence of mens having been very wicked: *ver. 3.* 'I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation; His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them; Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up the substance.' From which true Observation, he *wrongfully* intends to conclude, that, because *Job* was afflicted with the like Misfortunes, therefore he might justly be charged with having been guilty of the like Impieties; An Inference very derogatory to the Sovereignty and Wisdom of Providence, and very unjust to the Character of the pious Sufferer. However, upon the whole, he adds this just and true general Observation, the consideration of which is of perpetual Usefulness, *ver. 6.* 'Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.'

THE words contain, 1st, A 'pathetical description of the Shortness and Vanity, the Sorrows and Calamities of Humane Life; Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

2^{dly}, 'A Declaration, that these Miseries of Humane Life, do not arise from Chance or from Necessity, from blind Fate or unaccountable Accidents;

‘ but from the wise Disposition of the Providence of
 ‘ God, governing the World : Affliction cometh not
 ‘ forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of
 ‘ the ground.’ Wherein,

3dly, IT is implied, and intended to be inferred,
 that *there are many just and good, wise and useful Ends;*
upon account of which, God permits so many Afflictions
to fall upon Mankind; and the consideration therefore of
which, (so far as we can discover them in this present
dark and imperfect state,) ought to teach us Patience,
and chearful Resignation to the Divine Will.

1st HERE is a pathetic description of the Shortness
 and Vanity, the Sorrows and Calamities of Humane
 Life : *Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly up-*
wards. Afflictions and Calamities of innumerable
 kinds, seem, in the course of things, as necessarily and
 constantly to attend the Life of Man ; as ’tis the na-
 ture of *light* things to ascend upwards, or of things
heavy to descend. And of this, Experience is so con-
 tinual an Evidence, that there needs no arguments of
 Reason to prove it, nor ornaments of Expression to de-
 scribe it. We are *born* into the world, weak and de-
 fenceless ; we *grow up*, subject to numberless Casual-
 ties ; and in the *whole course* of our lives, are perpetu-
 ally exposed to Dangers which cannot be foreseen, and
 to Troubles which are not possible to be prevented. The
 Weakness and Imperfections of *Childhood*, the Vanity
 and Follies of *Youth*, the Cares and Sollicitudes of
Manhood, the Uneasiness and Infirmities of *Age* ; fol-
 low each other in a close and speedy succession. And,
 in Each of these states, we are continually obnoxious
 to Pains and Diseases of *Body* ; and in most of them,
 to the acuter Torment of Anxiety and Vexations of
Mind. All which Evils are increased, by the Acci-
 dents

dents and Misfortunes of the World, by our own Negligences and Vices, by the Wickedness and Unreasonableness of other men, by the Judgments of God upon ourselves, and by the consequences of the Judgments he inflicts for the Unrighteousness of others. All which several calamities are emphatically described by pious men, in different places of Scripture. With respect to our being liable to Pains and Diseases, Man is chastened, saith *Elihu* in the book of *Job*, with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; (*Job* xxxiii. 19.) and good *Hezekiah* complains; Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent; I have cut off like a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining sickness; from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me:-----like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove, *Isai.* xxxviii. 12. With respect to the vain Labours, and Anxiety of life; Surely every man, saith the Psalmist, walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them; (*Psal.* xxxix. 6.) And *Solomon*, who had still greater experience of all the Labours of men under the Sun, thus expresses it, (*Eccl.* ii. 23.) For all his days are sorrows, and his travel grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night: This also is vanity. With respect to the Oppressions and Troubles, that good men suffer from the Wickedness of others; I considered, saith the same Wise Observer, (*Eccl.* ix. 2.) that all things come alike to all, that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not, to the Good and to the Sinner, to him that sweareth and to him that feareth an Oath: Moreover, I saw under the Sun the place of judgment, that wickedness

was there ; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there ; (iii. 16.) I beheld the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter ; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter, (iv. 1.) But if there were none of those external and superinduced calamities which men bring upon themselves and others, to augment the necessary and unavoidable Troubles which Humane Nature is born to ; yet even by these inherent ones alone, would the Complaint in the Text sufficiently be verified ; and Eliphaz might have justified his Observation, from the consideration only, of the mere natural Vanity, and Shortness of Humane Life ; Which the Scripture compares, to a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away ; (Jam. iv. 14.) to a tale that is told, and then remembered no more, (Ps. xc. 9.) to a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again, (Ps. lxxviii. 39.) Admonishing us upon all occasions, that our ‘ days
‘ are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent
‘ without hope, (Job vii. 6.) that they are swifter
‘ than a post ; they flee away, and see no good ; they
‘ are passed away as the swift ships, as the eagle that
‘ hasteth to the prey, (ix. 25, 26.) that Man who is
‘ born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble ; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down ;
‘ he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not, (xiv. 1, 2.) that as for man, his days are as grass ; as a
‘ flower of the field, so he flourisheth ; For the wind
‘ passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof
‘ shall know it no more, (Ps. ciii. 15, 16.) that our
‘ days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none
‘ abiding, (1 Cor. xxix. 15.) that all these things pass
‘ away like a shadow, and as a post that hasteth by ;
‘ And as a ship that passeth over the waves of the water, which, when it is gone by, the trace thereof
‘ cannot

cannot be found, neither the path-way of the keel
in the waves ; or as when a bird has flown through
the air, there is no token of her way to be found ;
-----even so we in like manner, as soon as we were
born, began to draw to our end, and have no sign of
virtue to show, (Wisd. v. 8.) Upon all which ac-
counts the Patriarch *Jacob*, when he was introduced
to the King of *Egypt*, complains, notwithstanding he
far exceeded the usual measure of mens present Age,
and enjoyed much larger Possessions than the generality
of Mankind, that yet *few and evil had the days of
the years of his pilgrimage been* ; (Gen. xlvii. 9.) This
Shortness and Vanity of Humane Life, is so obvious
to every man's daily Experience and Observation, that
it may seem in a manner needless to put men in mind
of That, which 'tis not possible for them not to know.
And yet so it comes to pass, that even the obviousness
itself of the Observation, and the evident certainty of
it ; is the cause that it has no more effect upon the ge-
nerality of Men, than if it were very difficult to be
observed at all ; And for this very reason, because men
are already satisfied that they know it sufficiently,
they never attend to it ; but live as if they knew it
not. It requires no reasoning, no arguing, no medi-
tation, for men to discover to themselves that they
must shortly die ; and therefore, putting away the
thoughts of it, as too trivial and obvious, they live
as if it would never happen. But

2dly, TOGETHER with this pathetic description
of the Shortness and Vanity, the Sorrows and Cala-
mities of Humane Life, that *Man is born unto trou-
ble, as the sparks fly upward* ; the Text contains like-
wise a Declaration, that these Miseries and Troubles
do not arise from *Chance* or from *Necessity*, from blind

Fate

Fate or unaccountable Accidents ; but from the wise Disposition of the Providence of God, governing the World : *Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.* And this indeed is the *only* true and solid comfort, that can possibly be afforded to a rational and considerate mind ; in order to support him both under the troubles of *Life*, and against the Fears of *Death*. The *Only* possible thing that can effectually enable a man, either to *bear patiently* the Afflictions and Troubles that will necessarily attend him here, or to be *willing and contented to depart from them*, with any hopes of entering into another and better State hereafter ; is, to be able to consider that there is a God, a Powerful and Just, a Wise and Good Being, that governs the World : By whose Wisdom and Goodness all things are designed, by whose Providence all things are conducted, to bring about the greatest and best Ends : by whose Power we were created, under whose Care and Government we are preserved and supported ; in whose presence we walk perpetually, whose eyes are upon all our Actions, and *in whom we live and move and have our Being* ; without whom, not a *sparrow falls to the ground*, or so much as a *hair of our head* perishes ; without whose direction no Evil can befall us, without whose Permission no Power can hurt us, and who is able finally to make *all things work together for good, to them that love and fear Him*. This, and This only, if men would take care to live *virtuously* ; (For to a *vitious* man there is No Comfort, neither in This life nor Another,) if men would take care to live *virtuously*, I say, the Thought of God's governing the World is *such* a Consideration, as is sufficient to cause to vanish all the tragical complaints of the Miseries and Vanity

of Humane Life. For, tho' we could not conjecture at any Reason why he has made us thus ; though we were not able to discern any kind and gracious designs, in the Afflictions that he lays upon us ; though the ways of Providence had been still more inextricable than they are, and his Judgments far more unsearchable than we now apprehend them to be ; yet certainly infinite Wisdom and infinite Goodness, might well be trusted and relied upon, by any reasonable and considerate mind. *That* Power, which in the frame and construction of the *natural* World, has adjusted all things by Weight and Measure : *That* Power, which with exquisite artifice has made every thing in the exactest harmony and proportion, to conspire regularly and uniformly towards accomplishing the best and wisest Ends, in compleating the beautiful Order and Fabrick of the *Material* Universe ; *That* Power, might surely in his government of the *moral* World likewise, in his disposing of intelligent and rational creatures, even though we could give *no account at all* of his ways, yet with the justest reason be *believed* to direct all things for the best, and in order to bring about the noblest and most excellent Ends. How much more, when, even in this short and dark State, our finite and narrow Understanding *is* able to discern *many* wise and useful designs in the severest and most difficult dispensations of his Providence, (as in the sequel of this discourse shall be particularly shown ;) how much more, I say, in *This case*, have we reason to submit, not only with patience and resignation, but even with joy and satisfaction, to his *good pleasure* in all things ; Firmly believing, that, as in the frame of nature, those things which by Atheistical Philosophers were anciently looked upon as arguments of Error and Defect, of want
either

either of Knowledge or Goodness in the formation of the *material World*, are since discovered to be most useful Contrivances, and Evidences of the most perfect and consummate Wisdom ; so in the government of the *rational and intelligent World*, in the dispensations of *Providence* towards Mankind, those very things, which by some Philosophers of old were urged as Arguments of an Evil Principle, of a Mischievous Supreme Cause, co-ordinate and repugnant to God the Author of all Good ; will, at the Great Day, (when the Reasons of things and the whole Counsel of God shall be more perfectly disclosed,) appear all to be most *Wise*, and *Gracious*, and *Good*.

DID our Afflictions come forth of the dust, and our troubles spring out of the ground ; Were there no other cause to produce them, no other Hand to direct them, no other Counsel to design them, no other Power to over-rule and remove them ; than the accidental concurrence of Senseless Atoms, than the fortuitous results of unguided Matter and Motion, than the blind Effects of inevitable Fate, or the mere jumbles of unintelligible Chance ; 'tis plain there could be no rational Comfort and Support to a considerate Mind, under the various Misfortunes and Calamities of Life. For what is the Hope of the Unbeliever, when God taketh away his Soul ? I should say, when Fate or Chance taketh away his Soul ? And on what ground can the Confidence of the Atheist rely ? His Expectations at best are thin as a Spider's web ; and his Hopes as the light Chaff, which the Wind scattereth away from the Face of the Earth. His Prosperity and Mirth can be but for a moment, and his Adversity must of necessity terminate in Despair. For what Relief is to be expected from Fate or Chance, which has no Understanding

ing? and what Support is *that* Man capable of in the days of Affliction, who does not believe things are guided by a wise hand, which can turn every thing finally to our Advantage? How weak, how empty a Satisfaction is it, to be told that our Miseries arise from the *Necessity of Fate*, and therefore that 'tis to no purpose not to be willing to submit to them! How small a Comfort is it, to consider that *Others* perhaps are miserable as well as we; and that therefore we have no greater reason to complain, than they! How poor, how insipid a relief is it, to understand that it cannot be long before all the Miseries and Calamities of Life will have an end put to them by *Death*; if at the same time our View be wholly bounded by that dark Prospect, and there be no Expectation beyond the Grave? And yet these are *all* the Comforts that Infidelity can afford, and *all* the Hopes of him that is *without God in the world*. In the moment of his *Prosperity*, he may say with the Fool in the Book of *Wisdom*, (ch. ii. ver. 6, 3.) *Come on, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth*; For our Life being extinguished, our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft air. But in the days of *Sorrow*, he will be convinced of his Folly; and repent and groan for anguish of Spirit, when it will be too late; and his Rejoicing will be turned into Despair. His past Pleasures will be remembered but as a Dream, and seem to him as a Shadow that departeth; his *present Trouble* will be insupportable; and his Fears of what may possibly be *to come*, will be unmixed and without Hope. The pretences of Philosophy, of Fortitude and Firmness of Spirit, of despising Pain, and looking upon
Death

Death as nothing, and as merely putting an end to our Being ; will appear to be vain Words, and mere empty Delusion ; and *He only* is capable of any true Comfort and Support, who is convinced that all things are directed *well* and to *good Ends*, by the All-wise Government of the Providence of God ; and who, by a life of Piety and true Holiness, has secured to himself finally, the Favour of that Supreme Disposer of all things.

THE same *Appearances of Nature*, the same *Arguments of Reason*, which prove to us the Being or Existence of God ; prove also his Providence in governing the World, and his inspection and directing of all Events : So that even from the *Light of Nature* itself, which to impartial and well-disposed Persons gives sufficient Evidences of the Being and Providence of God, 'tis manifest that no Affliction, no Trouble of any kind, can possibly come upon us without his Appointment or Permission. And *the Scripture*, to confirm and strengthen our Faith and Dependence upon God at all times and under all circumstances, is very large and express in this particular. *I am the Lord, and there is none else ; --- I form the Light, and create Darknes ; I make Peace, and create Evil*, (not moral, but natural Evil ;) *I the Lord do all these things*, II. xlv. 7. *The Lord killeth, and maketh alive ; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up*, 1 Sam. ii. 6. *He maketh sore, and bindeth up ; he woundeth, and his hands make whole*, Job v. 18. *Out of the mouth of the most High, proceedeth not Evil and Good ?* Lam. iii. 38. And 'tis a very remarkable Expression in the Law of *Moses*, that when a man was smitten and killed by Accident, without any ill Intention at all in him that did it, his Misfortune is thus described, *Exod. xxi. 13. If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into*

his

his hand; To signify, that even those things, which to Us seem the most casual and merely accidental, yet in respect of God are really Providential, and could not happen but by his suffering them and (for wise reasons) permitting them to be done. That is; they are not indeed done always by his Direction and Appointment; but, because they could not come to pass at all without his Knowledge and Permission, therefore we may be assured that he intends them for good, and to make use of them to serve some wise and good Ends of Providence, in that it was not his pleasure, and he did not think fit to over-rule and prevent them. And accordingly the Prophet Amos puts the Question universally, not only concerning Judgments sent immediately by God's Command and Appointment, but concerning all, even those also which we call natural and accidental Evils; *Shall there be Evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it?* ch. iii. ver. 6. Which words some have been so very unreasonable as to interpret even of Sin itself or moral Evil; (which is the highest Absurdity and Blasphemy;) But with respect to all natural Evils, (since second causes have no Powers but from and in subordination to the first,) 'tis strictly true; And therefore, even though we could not at all understand the reasons why God is pleased to permit them, yet since we are sure they cannot but be of his permission, we have more reason with all Patience and Resignation to depend upon him that he intends and will direct them for good, than a Child can have, in things above its apprehension, to rely upon the Kindness of a most affectionate Parent.

But 3dly, Though this might be a sufficient Satisfaction in general; yet further, We are able to instance

in many particular wise and good Ends, for which Providence permits so many Afflictions to befall Mankind. The Consideration of which must be referred to another Opportunity.

SERMON

S E R M O N X I.

Of Resignation to the Divine Will in Affliction.

[*A Sermon Preached in Lent.*]

JOB v. 6, 7.

*Altho' Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust,
neither doth Trouble spring out of the ground,
yet Man is born unto Trouble, as the Sparks
fly upward.*

IN a fore-going Discourse, I have observed that these Words contain in them,

1. A pathetical Description of the Weakness and Vanity, the Sorrows and Calamities of human Life : *Man is born unto Trouble, as the Sparks fly upwards.*

2. A Declaration that these Miseries of humane life, do not arise from Chance or from Necessity, from blind Fate or unaccountable Accidents ; but from the wise Disposition of the Providence of God, governing the World. *Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground.* Wherein

3. I T is implied, and intended to be inferred, that there are many just and good, wise and useful Ends ; upon account of which, God permits so many Afflictions to fall upon Mankind ; and the consideration therefore of which, (so far as we can discover them in this present dark and imperfect State,) ought to teach us Patience and cheerful Resignation to the Divine Will.

THE two former of these I have already discoursed on ; and shown, that, since *Afflictions do not come forth of the Dust*, do not arise from Chance or from Necessity ; but are all under the Disposal of the All-Wise Providence of God, governing the World ; this one general consideration alone, ought sufficiently to secure our entire Trust and Dependance upon God, our Hope and Confidence in Him ; so as to be an abundant Support and Comfort to us, under all the possible Accidents and Calamities of Life ; even tho' we could not at all understand any of the grounds of his Acting, and the Reasons of his so dealing with us.

BUT seeing *this* is not wholly the Case ; and that in this general Observation it seems moreover to be implied, and intended to be inferred, that there are also discoverable in particular, many just and good, wise and useful Ends ; upon account of which, God permits so many Afflictions to fall upon Mankind ; and the consideration of which, ought to teach us Patience, and cheerful Resignation to the Divine Will : It remains therefore, that we proceed now, in the

3^d and last place, To consider *what* are (some of the plainest and most satisfactory of) those reasons, that we are capable of discovering ; upon account of which, it was best and fittest that things should be so ordered as they are ; and in consideration whereof, we ought more

fully

fully and readily to acquiesce in the divine good pleasure in all things.

AND first, We are to consider, that some of those things which we usually esteem among the Troubles and Afflictions of life, are such as may justly and must necessarily be resolved into the *absolute Sovereignty and Dominion* of God. Of this kind, are Mortality in general, and the Shortness of humane Life ; the unequal Distribution of Riches and Honour, and the good things of this present Life ; the different capacities, and abilities of Mind ; the different tempers, and constitutions of Body ; the different States and conditions wherein God has originally placed men in the World. Of these things there *can*, there *needs* no other account to be given, than the absolute Sovereignty and Dominion of God. For infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness, may display itself in producing what Variety of Creatures he pleases ; and in communicating to them his free Bounties, in what measure and proportion he thinks fit. He that had no Obligation, no Want or Necessity upon him, to give Being to any thing at all ; may give Being to his Creatures for what Duration he pleases ; and distribute his absolute and unconditionate Favours, Without giving *any* account of his Ways. 'Tis no just ground of complaint in *Men*, that they were not created in the condition of *Angels* ; any more than 'tis an injury to *inferior Creatures*, that they are not indued with the Capacities of *Men*. Neither is it a wrong to those who are born with lower capacities and to meaner circumstances, that they are made inferior to others ; But they have *much more reason* to be thankful for what they *have*, than to be displeased for want of what they *have not*. 'Tis sufficient if, in matters of *Reward and Punishment*, God in the End deals

equitably with all his rational Creatures ; and disposes of them according to the proportion of the several deserts, of each of them, in their respective States. But in the *original appointment* of the *State and Condition* of their Nature, there is no room for any other consideration, than that of the absolute Sovereignty of infinite Power, and the various Exercise of infinite Wisdom. The Servant who gained four Talents by the improvement of two, 'twas *just* that he should be rewarded with four Cities ; and that the reward of ten Cities should be allotted to *him*, who by a right use of five Talents had improved them to Ten. But why *originally* the one should be intrusted with five Talents, and the other but with two ; of this there needs and *can* no other account be given, but this ; *Is it not lawful for God, to do what he pleases with his own ? and Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus ? Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one Vessel to Honour and another to Dishonour ? Not, one person unconditionally to final Happiness, and another to Misery ; But (as the same Apostle expressly explains himself, 2 Tim. ii. 20.) In a great house there are not only vessels of Gold, and of Silver, but also of Wood and of Earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour. That is : Hath not the Master a Right, to employ his Servants in what several Stations he pleases, more or less honourable ; provided, in his final Distribution, he deals equitably with each of them, in their several and respective degrees ? As the Glory of the *natural World* consists in that beautiful *Variety* of things, whereof the Whole is composed ; So in the *moral World*, God has made rational Creatures of *various Capacities*, and placed them in *different Stations* : And it imports not to each one's final State,*

what

what his present Station is, but *how well* he behaves himself in That Station. The Scripture, as well as the Reason of the Thing itself, frequently refers us to this Sovereign Power of God, in accounting for the unequal distribution of both temporal and spiritual advantages. *He plucketh down one, and setteth up another ; He maketh poor, and maketh rich ; he bringeth low, and lifteth up :* He causeth one Nation or Person to be rich and powerful, and another to be poor and weak. He reveals himself to one People in one manner, and to another in a different manner ; and in all this, there is neither Reward nor Punishment, but the various exercise of his Wisdom and Power over his Creatures, without wrong or injury to any of them. He chose the Nation of the *Jews* to be his peculiar People, to reveal his Law to them in a particular manner, and to make them the Standard of true Religion to the World ; *He did not deal so with any other nation, neither had the Heathen knowledge of his Laws.* And this *St Paul* ascribes to the absolute Will and Pleasure of God, who may dispose of his unconditionate Favours in what manner and proportion he thinks fit : *Rom. ix. 10, 11. When Rebeckah had conceived by one, even by our Father Isaac ; the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil ; that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth ; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger ; As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* Which Text, has therefore only seemed difficult, because men have not usually attended *what* that purpose of God according to Election was, which the Apostle There declares should stand ? For, was it a Purpose of electing one to eternal Happiness, and the other to eternal Misery ? No ; but of causing

causing the *elder to serve the younger*. The Words themselves are express : *That the purpose of God, faith he, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth*. God might appoint whom he pleased, to be the Father of the more powerful Nation, the progenitor of his peculiar people ; and yet there was plainly no unrighteousness with God ; no wrong or injury done to *him*, upon whom that Favour was not conferred, which could of right be claimed by Neither. To apply this, or any other Texts of like importance, to mens *final and eternal* estate of Rewards and Punishments in another World ; is indeed charging God wrongfully, and putting the greatest abuse that can be upon Holy Scripture, wherein God so constantly declares that he is *no Respector of Persons*, and that every man *shall be judged finally according to his works*. But *which shall be here superior, and which shall serve ; who shall in this Sense be hated, and who be loved ;* (all which is comparative only, and not absolute ; and in which there is nothing of Reward or Punishment, but merely a variety of distribution of undeserved Favours ;) in this, God has an absolute Right of acting by his Sovereign Power and Supreme Authority, and of doing what he pleases with his own. And since every thing that we All enjoy, proceeds wholly from God's *free* goodness and bounty ; no man, whether he has received less or more, many advantages or fewer, has *any* just reason of complaint, *any* ground to say unto his Maker, *Why hast thou made me thus ?* This is the account St Paul gives, of God's first calling the people of the *Jews* ; and the same he gives, of his afterwards *rejecting* them again, and taking in the *Gentiles*. *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion : That is ; God*
only,

only, and not short-sighted *Man*, is the proper Judge, upon *whom*, upon *what* persons or *Nations*, 'tis fittest and wisest for him to bestow his Favours. Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? What, if God, willing to show his *Wrath*, and to make his Power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to Destruction; And that he might make known the Riches of his Glory, on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory? Even *Us*, whom he has called, not of the *Jews* only, but also of the *Gentiles*, Rom. ix. 15, 21, 22. In all which, there is no declaration of any arbitrary proceeding in God, with respect to the last and great judgment; as some have very unreasonably apprehended: (For, the long-suffering here-mentioned towards the vessels of wrath, i. e. the unbelieving *Jews*, was in expectation even of *Their* Repentance and Amendment; and the vessels of mercy here described, are not particular persons singly considered, but the whole body of *Christians* as opposed to the whole Nation of the *Jews*, and as including both *Gentile* as well as *Jewish* Believers; Even *Us*, saith the Apostle, whom he has called, not of the *Jews* only, but also of the *Gentiles*;) But the plain and whole intention of the words, is to justify God's dealing with the Nation of the *Jews*, in rejecting *them* and receiving in the *Gentiles*; and to show, that men have no just reason to complain against God, for manifesting his Power and Glory in different dispensations to different Persons at different times, and for distributing differently his undeserved Bounty, and allowing men various and different advantages, after such manner as he himself thinks fit: Inasmuch as they who enjoy the fewest advantages, receive always more than they deserve or can claim; and have no

wrong

wrong or injury done to them, by the abounding of God's free Goodness to others. It was no injustice at the first to other Nations, that God, out of his free Bounty, was pleased to bless in a singular manner the Posterity of faithful *Abraham* for many generations; nor was it afterwards any injury to the *Jews*, that God was pleased to receive the *Gentiles* likewise, into a participation of the same Favour and Blessings with themselves. So far as the Advantages of God's peculiar people were *temporal*, the consideration of his *Sovereign Power and Authority* is a sufficient and satisfactory account of the Difference; But as to mens *spiritual and eternal concern*, the *Judge of all the Earth* knows how to do what is right; *With Equity will he judge the Nations*, and will make an equitable and proportionable allowance, for the unequal circumstances of every man's case. Yet, even *here* also, there is no injustice, in giving men different opportunities and different advantages; in entrusting them with different talents; and putting into the hands of Some, according to his own good pleasure, a greater possibility of obtaining larger Rewards. Neither further in *this* likewise can there be any ground of complaint, if he shall still think fit to make use of his Supreme Right, in giving freely as great a recompence to Some of whom he has not exacted so severe a Service, as to Others who may imagine themselves, by the performance of a stricter Duty, to have acquired for themselves a title to a more ample Reward. Our Saviour represents this to us in the Parable of the Labourers in the vineyard, who having been hired at different times of the day, and receiving each of them in the Evening the same reward; those which had been hired in the morning, tho' they received their full payment, yet were displeased at their Lord's free bounty,

in giving the Same to those who had been hired last ; and murmured against him, saying ; *These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto Us, which have born the burden and heat of the Day : But he answered one of them, and said ; Friend, I do thee no wrong ; didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take that thine is, and go thy way ; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee : Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? Is thine Eye evil, because I am good ?* St. Matt. xx. 12. The Parable may be understood, to respect God's dealings either with the *Jews* and *Gentiles* in different Ages of the World, or with Persons converted to the belief of the Gospel in different Periods of their lives. God's various distribution of his free gifts and undeserved mercies, affords no just reason of complaint to those, who only want what no man has a right to claim, and what those who have, must acknowledge to be of mere bounty. And this is plainly the case in most of those things, which we are apt to look upon as some of the greatest Afflictions and Calamities of Life. They often are not any real and positive infliction of Judgments from the hand of God, but merely the original differences of mens state and circumstances, the variety of God's Creation, the different Talents committed to mens charge, the different Stations God has placed men in, for their various trials, and in order to the exercise of a diversity of Duties. *Poverty* has not always the nature of an affliction or judgment, but is rather merely a state of life, appointed by God, for the proper tryal and exercise of the virtues, of *Contentment*, *Patience*, and *Resignation* ; And for one man to murmur against God, because he possesses not those Riches which he sees given to another ; is the *wrath* that killeth the foolish man, and the

the *envy* that *slayeth the silly one*, Job v. 2. The like may be said of *want of Honour and Power*, want of *Children* to succeed in our *Estates and Families*, *Weakness of Body*, *Shortness of Life*, and the like ; nay, and even of *Spiritual* disadvantages themselves likewise ; *want of capacity* and good understanding, want of *knowledge* and instruction, want of many *opportunities* and means of improvement which others enjoy. None of all which, are any just ground of complaint against God, or any reason why we should not with all satisfaction acquiesce in his divine good pleasure ; since all these things are only different distributions of such free gifts, as he, not being obliged to bestow on *any man*, may therefore without controversy divide to *every man* in what measure and proportion he himself thinks fit : Only *This* we may depend upon, that in such measure only will he *exact* our duty, as he enables us to *perform* it ; and that to whom little is given, of him shall not be much required : And *This* brings all the *seeming inequalities* in the *World*, to a *real equality* at last ; so that *he which gathers much, hath nothing over* ; and *he that gathers little, has no lack*. And we may justly apply to God's *general* dealings with all Mankind, the exclamation *St Paul* uses upon occasion of his wonderful *particular* dispensations to the people of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* ; *O the depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God* ; *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !* In all circumstances of Life therefore, we are not to be uneasy that God has made us inferior to others ; or that he has set before us, greater hardships and difficulties to go through ; or that he has given us less abilities, and fewer opportunities than others : But we are to apply ourselves wholly, (with all acquiescence and resignation,)

to the proper duties of *that* station, or of *those* circumstances, wherein God has been pleased to place us. Poverty is not an Argument, to envy the Rich; but a strong Obligation to study the duties of Humility, Contentment and Resignation. Ignorance and want of capacity, meanness of Parts and want of Instruction, is not a reason to murmur that God has not entrusted us with *more* talents; but an admonition to take care that we make a right improvement of those *few* that are given us. Weakness of *Body*, is not a just occasion to repine against God, for not giving us the Strength and Health wherewith he has blessed some others; but a continual Argument to us, to exercise and improve such Virtues as are more peculiar to the *Mind*. The consideration of the *Uncertainty* and *Shortness* of *Life* itself, ought not to make us spend our Time in fruitless complaints of the Vanity and Meanness of our State; but to cause us perpetually to consider, that it is not of so great importance how *long* we live, as how *well*: For (as it is excellently expressed in the Book of *Wisdom*,) ‘honourable age is ‘not that which standeth in length of time, nor that ‘is measured by numbers of years; but Wisdom is ‘the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted Life is old ‘Age.’

Secondly, ; IT is to be considered, that a great part of the troubles of Life, and the Afflictions we are apt to complain of, are not the immediate and original appointment of *God at all*; but the mere *natural* Effects and consequences, of our own Sins. ‘Tis true, it is indeed the wise constitution of *Providence*, which thus ordered and disposed the nature of things at first, that most Sins should even in the *natural* consequences of things, be some time or other attended

with their proper Punishment. But I consider it not Now in *That respect*, as being, *upon the whole*, the wise Appointment of God, to convince us of the Folly of Sin, and to lead us to Repentance ; but as being *in particular*, in the present state and order of things, the mere *natural* Effect and Consequence of our own foolish and sinful choice. Which consideration alone, ought to make us acquiesce with all Humility and Patience, under that Burden which not God but our own hands have laid upon us : For, *why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his Sins ? Why should he murmur against God, when he eateth but the Fruit of his own Ways, and is filled only with the natural consequences of his own devices ? The Foolishness of Man* (as Solomon excellently expresses it, *Prov. xix. 3.*) *perverteth his own way, and then his heart fretteth against the Lord.* Very unreasonably and unjustly. For, if Poverty be the Effect of extravagance and profuseness, and a man's substance be consumed by riotous living : If Pain and Diseases of Body, be the Effect of Debauchery and intemperate Courses ; and the Comforts of Age, be prevented by the Follies of Youth : If Anxiety and continual Vexation of Mind, be the Vanity of Covetousness ; and the *sore travel* of him that *has neither Child nor Brother* ; of whom the Scripture says, that *there is no End of all his labour, neither is his Eye satisfied with riches ; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my Soul of good ;* These troubles are such as neither come forth of the dust, neither do they spring out of the ground, neither can they be complained of as proceeding from the *band of God* ; but they are only the *natural* Effects of mens own Follies, and the fulfilling the prophecies so often repeated in Scripture, that
they

they who *plow wickedness*, shall reap *iniquity*, (Hos. x. 13.) and they who *sow iniquity*, shall reap *vanity*, (Prov. xxii. 8.) And yet, even *These* also, the Afflictions which are the consequences of our own Folly, may by a wise improvement, by bearing them as becomes us, and by exercising ourselves to Wisdom under them; even *These* also, may become the matter of an excellent Virtue, and may turn into the occasion of much religious advantage.

Thirdly, It is to be considered, that some of the greatest afflictions and calamities of life, are the effects of God's publick judgments upon the World, for the wickedness and impiety of *others*. Wherein if virtuous and good men be sometimes involved, it ought to be a sufficient satisfaction to them to consider, that *this* is not the proper time for Rewards and Punishments to take place upon particular persons. And since they know God has reserved to *another state* the final and equitable distribution of justice according to every man's desert; wherein he will give a perfect *Account of all his Matters*; wherein every inequality shall be exactly set right, and every circumstance of each person's case be considered and adjusted; when God will perfectly justify himself in all his Proceedings, and *every mouth shall be stopped before him*; why should they be uneasy, that God *for the present* suffers second causes to take their regular course, and does not work perpetual miracles to deliver them from the common incidents of human nature, and from the publick misfortunes of the World? 'Tis recorded of *Josiah* King of *Judab*, (2 Kings xxiii. 25.) *'that like him was there no King before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his Soul, and with all his might, neither after him arose there any like him;*

him : Yet the Lord suffered him to fall by the sword, and turned not from the fierceness of his great Wrath wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the Provocations that Manasseh his Predecessor had provoked him withal ; and also for the innocent blood that he *had* shed, which the Lord would not pardon ; 2 Kings xxiv. 4. And in a general denunciation of the severest wrath of God against *Jerusalem*, he threatens by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, ch. xxi. ver. 3. that he would *cut off from it the righteous and the wicked*. In which case, it ought to be a sufficient satisfaction to truly pious and religious persons, that God has reserved for them their portion in another life.

THESE are Some of the *Many* considerations, which ought to oblige us, in *all* Circumstances of life whatsoever, *fully and readily* to acquiesce in the divine good pleasure. There are others yet behind, which are grounds not only of *acquiescence and Submission*, but even of *Thankfulness* also to God for sending upon us Afflictions greatly to our Advantage : Such as are those which, by the more immediate appointment of God, are intended and fitted to teach us *Humility*, to lead us to *Repentance*, to *wean* us from an *over-fond love of the World*, to make *Tryal and Improvement of our Faith*, and to make eminent *Examples* of Patience and Resignation, Fortitude and Contempt of the World. But these I must refer to another Opportunity.

S E R M O N

SERMON XII.

The End of GOD's afflicting Men.

[*A Sermon, preached in Lent.*]

JOB v. 6, 7.

Although Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground; yet Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upward.

THAT none of the Afflictions which befall Mankind, are the Effects either of blind Chance or of fatal Necessity; but that they are all under the direction of infinite Wisdom and Goodness governing the World, and in the general intended by Providence some way or other for our advantage; I have already shown in a foregoing Discourse. I have also proposed in particular some of the many Considerations, which ought to teach us Acquiescence and cheerful Submission to the divine Good-pleasure, under the several kinds and sorts of Afflictions, which we are perpetually subject to in the present Life; Name-
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ly, that *some* of those things which we usually reckon among the Troubles of Life, are not properly *Judgments inflicted* upon us, but merely the Effects of God's variously exercising his Infinite Power and Wisdom, his absolute Sovereignty and Dominion over his Creatures, in placing men originally in such different States and Conditions as he himself thought fit ; whereof *no man* has reason to complain ; because what *every man* enjoys, in whatever proportion it be, is still *all* only of free Goodness and mere Bounty : That *some others* of the Troubles we are apt to complain of are nothing but the *natural* Consequences of our own Sins ; and therefore not at all chargeable upon God : That *others* of them, are the effects of God's *publick* Judgments upon a sinful World ; from partaking of which Calamities if *particular* good and pious persons are not exempted *at present*, is it not abundantly sufficient that God has *hereafter* appointed for them a day of exacter retribution ? These are sufficient grounds of *Contentment and Acquiescence*, of willing *Submission and Resignation* to the Divine Will. But there are *other considerations* still behind, (which I am *now* to proceed to speak to,) which will appear to be Arguments, not of *Contentment* only and *patient Resignation*, but even of *Thankfulness* also ; Considerations, which will show, that most of the Afflictions we are apt to be uneasy under, *far* from being Arguments of God's neglecting and disregarding us, are some of the greatest instances of his paternal Care and Affection towards us, and designed to tend very much to our particular benefit and advantage. The *Ends* of *this* kind, which we have reason to believe God generally intends in the Afflictions he is pleased to send upon us, may be reduced to these four,

1. To teach us *Humility*, and a just Sense of our own Unworthiness.
2. To lead us to *Repentance* for our past Errors.
3. To wean us from an over-fond Love of the present *World*. And
4. To try, improve and perfect our Virtues ; and make some particular persons eminent Examples of Faith and Patience to the World.

1. To teach us *Humility* and a just sense of our own Unworthiness. Though *Pride* evidently was not made for man, nor a haughty Spirit for him that is born of a Woman ; Though nothing is more absurd and unnatural, than for *Dust and Ashes* to be lift up against its Maker ; and for the thing formed, to exalt itself against him that formed it ; Though nothing can be more unreasonable and ridiculous, than for *Man*, whose breath is in his nostrils, to despise his Brother, and to behave himself insolently towards him who is of the same Nature and Dignity, as well as of like Passions, with himself ; Yet in Fact so it is, that often *Man* being in Honour, hath no Understanding, Ps. xlix. 20. and, being puffed up with Prosperity, considereth not whereof he is made, and remembereth not that he is but dust. Such is the Weakness of our Nature, that when one is made rich, and when the glory of his house is increased, he is very apt to forget, that when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away with him, and that his glory shall not descend after him. When Power is put into our hands, and a great Superiority of worldly Advantages gives us opportunity to judge in our own cases ; we are extremely apt, to make *Will* succeed in the place of Reason, and *Humour or Passion* instead of Right. And this,

176 *The End of GOD's afflicting Men.*

this, not only in Persons openly profane, and despisers of Religion; But such is the deceitfulness of mens Hearts, that in a long course of uninterrupted Prosperity, this secret Pride is apt to grow insensibly, even upon those who do not affect to practise Iniquity. The almost only certain and effectual remedy of which Evil, and the proper Preservative against it, is that mixture of *Afflictions* and Disappointments in the World, which, by the wise order and appointment of Providence, puts men in mind of their own Weakness and Infirmary, brings them to a right Sense of themselves and of their dependence upon God, puts them upon serious consideration of the true State and Circumstances of things, and is therefore in Scripture called the *Discipline and Instruction* of the Lord; *Job xxxiii. 16. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction; That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man;-----He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: &c.* St Paul himself, tho' so eminent an Example of Piety, though so constant and indefatigable a Labourer in the work of his Ministry, though so singular an instance of Mortification and Contempt of the World; yet declares concerning himself, *2 Cor. xii. 7. that lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the Revelations, there was sent upon him an Affliction, which he calls the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure.* Which if so great a Man as St Paul, thought to be his own case; Who is there in these later and corrupter Ages, that, in Prosperity, can be sure of possessing his Soul with that Humility and Meekness, which Adversity would teach him? or that, in Adversity, can

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be sure he should not be puffed up by a course of Prosperity ; so as to make it to himself a much greater Evil, than the Affliction he is now so uneasy under, and the Usefulness of which he is so loath to be sensible of ?

2. ANOTHER End of God's sending Afflictions and Troubles upon Men, is to lead us to *Repentance* for our past Errors. This is excellently expressed by *Elibu*, (*Job xxxvi. 8.*) ' If they be bound in fetters, ' and be holden in cords of affliction ; then he sheweth ' them their work, and their transgressions that they ' have exceeded ; he openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.' When a wicked man prospers in all his worldly affairs, and his designs are crowned with perpetual Success ; when he is surrounded on all sides with undisturbed Plenty, and all his appetites are gratified with the constant enjoymēt of Ease and Pleasure ; 'tis no wonder that he forgets the God that is above, and considers not that *for all these things God will call him into judgment* : Good Admonition and Advice makes no impression upon his Mind, and the serious Exhortations of Religion find no room to enter : He is apt to put far from him the Evil day ; and to say to his Soul, *Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry ; we will fill ourselves now with new wine, and to-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant*, (*Is. lvi. 12.*) Persons in this State, the Scripture every where represents as in the most dangerous condition : *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth*, saith St James, *and been wanton ; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter*, *Jam. v. 5.* *Wo to them that are at ease in Zion*, *Amos vi. 1.* *I am very sore displeased with the Heathen that are at ease*, *Zech. i. 15.* *Moab baib*

178 *The End of GOD's afflicting Men.*

hath been at ease from his Youth, and he has settled on his lees, Jer. xlviii. 11. i. e. has gone on carelessly, in a long and uninterrupted course of Wickedness. The greatest Blessing and Happiness, that can befall such persons as these ; the greatest instance, of the mercy of God towards them ; is, the sending upon them some great Affliction ; which, like a severe medicine in a very dangerous distemper, may awaken them out of their Lethargy and Stupidity ; may cause them to consider, and entertain sober Thoughts ; may bring them to a right understanding, of themselves and of their own Danger. The silent instruction, of Reason and true Wisdom ; the soft voice of God, in the gentle admonitions of Conscience not yet terrified with any great Fear ; is not attended to, by inconsiderate persons ; is not heard in the Hurry of Passions, that have been long used to prevail ; and among a multitude of Appetites, which have been constantly accustomed to be gratified without denial. But when the Judgments of God are abroad in the Earth, then the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness, II. xxvi. 9. Then men begin to consider with themselves, what their State and Condition is ; and Consideration, is the foundation of Repentance, the first motive and beginning of Religion. Of This, an eminent instance is recorded in the History of Manasseh ; who, in his Prosperity made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the Heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel : But in his captivity, when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers, 2 Chr. xxxiii. 9, 12. And the example of his Repentance was afterwards as eminent, as that of his Impiety before had been pernicious. This is the proper effect of God's

Judgments

Judgments in the World ; And if these last and severest Exhortations to Repentance, have not that due effect upon Sinners ; their case *then* becomes desperate and without hope. Nothing *then* remains, but that God leave them to themselves ; For, *why should they be stricken any more ? they will revolt more and more*, Is. i. 5. This is the greatest and most extreme, of all the Temporal Curses of God ; *I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery*, Hof. iv. 14. And 'tis the proper consequence of not being brought to Repentance by this last Admonition, even by *Afflictions themselves*. Thus God complains of the impenitency of the *Jews*, Am. iv. 6, &c. 'I have given you want of bread in all your places, and have withholden the rain from you, and have smitten you with blasting and mildew ; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt ; your young men have I slain with the sword ; I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha ; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.' And 'tis set down as part of the character of the *Kingdom of the Beast*, the *Kingdom of Antichristian Tyranny*, the corruptest State of men that ever was in the world, Rev. xvi. 9, 11. that they *blasphemed the name of God, because of their pains and their plagues, but repented not of their deeds, to give glory to the God of Heaven* : That is, to return from their Idolatries, Superstitions and Follies, to the rational Worship of the True God, in Righteousness, Charity and Truth. This Incurigibleness, is the worst and most desperate state, that wicked men can possibly arrive at in the present World : But the proper and natural Effect of God's Judgments, if they would

180 *The End of GOD's afflicting Men.*

would hearken to them, is to lead them to Repentance: *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord, Lam. iii. 39, 40.*

Now if Afflictions be thus fitted, in their proper Tendency, to convert the *wickedest* of men that are not utterly incorrigible; much *more* are they suited to convince good men of their failings, to make them sensible of their Errors, to bring them to more frequent and serious Consideration, and to a more perfect Repentance and Amendment. The very *best* of men, are far from being perfect; and *too many* good men, have even great imperfections; which they are not duly sensible of, but in a day of Affliction; and there are many Duties, and many Doctrines in Scripture, which men are not apt to understand rightly, but in a time of Sorrow, and more serious Consideration. David himself confesses, *Pf. cxix. 71, 67. It is good for me, that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes; For, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.* And That great man Job, after his severe trial, acknowledges before God, (*Job xlii. 5, 6.*) *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.* The Sons of Jacob were never truly sensible of the greatness of their Crime in selling their Brother, till they found themselves in great distress in Egypt; And Then They said one to another (*Gen. xlii. 21.*) *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his Soul, when he besought us, and we would not bear; therefore is this distress come upon us.* And of the whole Nation of the Jews, 'tis remarked by the Psalmist, (*Pf. lxxviii. 34.*) that *when he slew them,*

them, then they sought him, and returned, and inquired early after God; and remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer.

UPON this account, the Afflictions that God sends upon his people and servants, are so frequently declared in Scripture to be Evidences of his Love and Care towards them. *When we are judged, (saith St Paul,) we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world,* 1 Cor. xii. 32. And our Lord himself declares, *Rev. iii. 19: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent.* Which Exhortation the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* thus excellently paraphrases: 'My Son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth: If we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his Holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby,' *Heb. xii. 5, &c.* The Apostle allows, that Afflictions cannot indeed but be grievous to humane Nature, when they are actually upon us: But the Consideration of the great advantage they may and are intended to turn to, by religious improvement; is abundantly sufficient to make any ingenuous and considerate temper, (which suffers not passion and present uneasiness to prevail wholly over Reason,)

182 *The End of GOD's afflicting Men.*

to say with *Eli*, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good* ; and with pious *Job* ; *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away* ; *Blessed be the Name of the Lord* : For, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not (patiently) receive evil* ?

THERE is one way, by which afflictions of this kind, namely, such as are sent upon us by way of correction, may in great measure be prevented ; and That is, if we would take care so to behave ourselves, as not to stand in need of them ; so to judge ourselves, as not to be judged of the Lord. *Job xxxiii. 27.* *God looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not : he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.* But This must be understood only of this one particular kind of Afflictions ; such as are intended for our correction, and to lead us to Repentance for some particular Sins.

3. ANOTHER End of God's sending Afflictions and Troubles upon men, is to wean us from an over-fond love of the present world. There is nothing that more hinders mens progress in Religion, nothing that more softens the minds, and cools the Zeal even of good and well-disposed persons, than a constant, careless, habitual enjoyment of, and affection to, even those pleasures of Life, which cannot perhaps be charged with being directly sinful : *O Death*, says the wise Son of *Sirach*, *Ecclus. xli. 1.* *How bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, unto the man that has nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things !* As a continual Calm corrupteth the Waters ; so a long and uninterrupted Prosperity, is a perpetual Danger and Temptation. Of the people of the *Jews* 'tis observed, *Deut. xxxii. 15.* that
when

when *Jeshurun* waxed fat, he kicked, and forsook the God that made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. And 'tis no less true of the Christian Church, that when, upon the Emperor's first becoming Christian, it began to receive worldly Incouragement; the Contentions among Christians multiplied, and the Purity of their Manners decreased. And in our own Nation it has been justly observed, that true Religion never had so remarkable an influence upon mens Lives and Manners, as at such times when we were most apprehensive of its being in danger to be removed from us. For this reason God has seldom chosen to make his best Servants the most prosperous in the world. The Patriarchs did but *sojourn in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, and confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth*; For they looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God, Heb. xi. 9, 10. And our Saviour inculcates no one thing so often upon his Disciples, as the danger of worldly Ease and Plenty, and the *Blessedness of them that mourn.*

YET on the other side, *Afflictions* have also their proper Temptations, to Impatience, and Discontent, and Complaining against God; and *Prosperity*, if well employed, may become the Matter of an excellent Virtue: For, *Blessed is the rich, that is found without blemish, and hath not gone after gold; that hath been tried thereby, and found perfect; that might offend, and hath not offended; or might do evil, and hath not done it*, Eccclus. xxxi. 8, 10. Wherefore it is best for us, not to be solicitous after either State; but, with all Submission, to leave that wholly to God; who

knows, much better than we, what is most convenient for us.

4thly, and *Lastly*; ANOTHER End of God's sending Afflictions upon men, is to *try, improve, and perfect* their Virtues, and make eminent *Examples* of their *Faith and Patience*. This was the case of *Job*, who was afflicted by the immediate hand of God; and this was the case of the *Apostles*, who were permitted to be persecuted by *wicked men*; and St Paul tells us concerning our Saviour himself, (*Heb. ii. 10.*) that he was *made perfect through sufferings*. Of such Afflictions as these, the Scripture declares that they are to be *gloried in*, because they *work patience*, (*Rom. v. 3. and Jam. i. 3.*) that they *fall out unto the furtherance of the Gospel*, (*Phil. i. 12.*) that they are a *trial of Faith, much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire*, (*1 Pet. i. 7.*) That, by these, *many are purified and made white and tried*, (*Dan. xii. 10. and xi. 35.*) 'And having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded; for God proved them, and found them worthy for himself; As gold in the furnace has he tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering; And in the time of their visitation they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble; They shall judge the nations, and have dominion over the people; and their Lord shall reign for ever,' (*Wisd. iii. 5, &c.*)

I SHALL but just mention two inferences, from what has been said, and so conclude.

AND 1st, From what has been said it appears, that 'tis a very wrong and unjust Conclusion, to imagine with *Job's* friends, that whoever is much afflicted, must consequently, have been very wicked, and that

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God is very angry with him. When a man's own conscience can apply his own Affliction to his past Sins, 'tis indeed very just and reasonable, that he should accept it as the Punishment of Sin, and as an Argument to Repentance ; But he must by no means make another man's Affliction, an occasion of censuring his Neighbour ; For on the contrary, the Scripture declares, that *happy is the man whom God correcteth ; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty ; for he maketh sore, and bindeth up ; he woundeth, and his hands make whole, Job v. 17. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law, Ps. xciv. 12. And St James, ch. i. ver. 12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.*

2dly, FROM what has been said, there appears great reason, for men to resign themselves with all patience to the Will of God ; and to rely upon him with full Trust and Assurance, (in all possible circumstances of life,) that he will direct things finally to our best advantage. *Ecclus. ii. 4. Whatsoever is brought upon thee, take cheerfully ; and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate : For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity. This was the practice of David ; who, when he was greatly distressed, encouraged himself in the Lord his God, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. And This was the Resolution of the Prophet, wherewith I shall conclude, Habbak. iii. 17. Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; though the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; though the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; Yet will I rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my Salvation.*

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SERMON XIII.

The Event of Things not always
answerable to Second Causes.

[*A Fast Sermon.*]

ECCLES. ix. 11.

I returned, and saw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them All.

THERE are some sort of persons in the World so slothful and negligent in their own Affairs, so hardly prevailed upon to undertake any thing that requires labour and diligence, so easily discouraged by any appearance of ill success, or so heedless and unactive in the prosecution of whatever they are about; as if they were of opinion even in temporal matters,

matters, what in some systems of religion has been absurdly affirmed concerning *Spirituals*, that God does every thing in men and for men, leaving nothing for them to do for *themselves*; or as if they thought That Precept to be *literal* and *universal*, which our Saviour spake with the *Latitude of a moral admonition*, to the *Apostles only*, and upon an extraordinary Occasion; Take no Thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be cloathed. Such persons as these, the wise Man elegantly describes in his Book of Proverbs: (ch. xx. 4.) *The Sluggard*, saith he, will not plow by reason of the Cold; therefore shall he beg in Harvest, and have nothing: *The slothful man saith*, There is a Lion without; I shall be slain in the Streets, Prov. xxii. 13: And ch. xxiv. 30. I went by the Field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And lo, it was all grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the Face thereof, and the Stone-Wall thereof was broken down; — So shall thy Poverty come as one that travelletb, and thy Want as an armed man. Nor is his Reproof and Admonition to those who are guilty of this Folly, less elegant than his Description of them; ch. vi. 6. Go to the Ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise; Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, yet provideth her meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest. And in the words immediately before my text, Eccles. ix. 10. Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it withall thy Might; do it with Diligence; do it with Attention, Industry, and Care.

THERE are Others, in a contrary Extreme; who rely with such confidence on the Effects of their own Wisdom and Industry, and so presumptuously depend upon

upon the natural and regular Tendencies of second Causes ; as if they thought, either there was no Superior Cause at all, on which the Frame of Nature depended ; or at least, that the Providence of God did not condescend to direct the Events of Things, in this lower and uncertain World. And These, are elegantly reproved in the words of my Text ; *I returned and saw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to men of Skill ; but Time and Chance happeneth to them All.*

I RETURNED : That is ; In that vast Compass of Knowledge which Solomon had, in being able to survey the whole Extent of Nature, and to observe the Tempers and Dispositions of men, and the different Events of Things in all variety of Times and Circumstances ; he turned his Thoughts and Observations from *one Subject to another*. In the verse before the Text, he views the *careless* or *negligent* part of mankind, and exhorts them to *diligence* : And then *I returned*, saith he, in the Words of the Text ; that is, he turned his View the other way, towards the *confident* or *presumptuous* ; And then he bids to take notice, that the *Race* is not always to the *Swift*, nor the *Battle* to the *Strong* ; (that is,) that the *Events* of Things do not always answer to the *Probabilities* of second Causes, unless the Wisdom of God thinks fit by the direction of his good Providence to make those Causes successful. *I returned, and saw under the Sun* ; that is, in the *whole Course* of this lower and uncertain world, in the whole compass of Humane Affairs, in the Histories of all Times or Ages, and in the Events that have happened to all Nations or People ;

People; I observed, saith he, upon the largest View and most extensive Experience, that the *Race* is often *not* to the *Swift*, nor the *Battle* to the *Strong*. The *Reason why* the Events of Things do frequently fail in this manner, of answering to the natural Probabilities of second Causes; is because many little and unforeseen Accidents unavoidably interposing, do very often change the whole Course of things, and produce an Event quite contrary to what in all reasonable probability was to have been expected. The *swiftest Racer*, upon the least accidental Slip, loses the Prize to an Adversary much slower than himself; and the *Potentest Armies*, upon the least Disorder befalling them in a day of Battle, have been forced to leave the Victory to an Enemy whom they before despised for his inferior Force. *Accidents* these things appear to *men*, because not possible to be foreseen or prevented by *our* short and imperfect Understandings: But, in the hands of *Providence*, the Causes and Reasons of these even the *minutest* Accidents are all as clearly and distinctly known and determinate, as the *grossest* and most *obvious* Causes are apparently discerned by *Us*. And by means of these unforeseen Causes, does God in his Great Government of the Universe, constantly bring about his own Designs, in Blessing or Punishing Nations according to his own good pleasure. *Amos ii. 14. The Flight shall perish from the Swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his Force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself; Neither shall He stand, that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of Foot, shall not deliver himself; neither shall he that rideth the horse, deliver himself. Again: Ps. xxxiii. 15. There is no King that can be saved by the multitude of an Host, neither is any mighty man delivered*

livered by much strength : *A Horse is counted but a vain thing to save a man, neither shall he deliver any man by his great Strength : Behold, the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, and upon them that put their Trust in his Mercy.* Solomon expresses the same Notion thus, *Prov. xxi. 30. There is no Wisdom, nor understanding, nor Counsel against the Lord ; The Horse is prepared against the day of Battle, but Safety is of the Lord.* And *Hannab*, in her prayer recorded, *1 Sam. ii. 4, 9. The Bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girt with Strength :—The Lord will keep the Feet of his Saints, and the Wicked shall be silent in Darknes ; for by Strength shall no man prevail.* These are all, as it were, Paraphrases upon the words of the Text ; *the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong.*

It follows : *neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to men of Skill.* That is : As Strength and Agility of *Body*, are not always successful in proportion to the Degree of those Faculties ; nor Powerful Armies Victorious, in proportion to the Numbers they consist of : So the Faculties and Abilities of the *Mind* likewise, Wisdom and Understanding, Dexterity and Skill ; are not always successful, as might regularly be expected, in obtaining Riches and Honour, Favour and Dignity in the World ; But unseen Accidents, (*Accidents* with regard to *Men*, but with *God* wise Dispensations of *Providence*,) invisibly and inexplicably turn the Course even of *these* things also : *For Time and Chance happeneth to them All.* *Isai. xliv. 25. God turneth wise men backward, and maketh their Knowledge Foolish.*

HAVING

HAVING, thus, briefly explained the *Meaning* of the several Phrases contained in the Text ; the *Doctrinal Observations* I shall now draw from thence, are as follows.

1st ; WE may observe, that what men vulgarly call *Chance* or unforeseen *Accident*, is in Scripture always declared to be the *determinate Counsel and Providence of God*. What careless and inconsiderate men ascribe in common Speech to *Chance* or *Fortune* ; that is, to *nothing at all*, but a mere empty word, signifying only their *Ignorance* of the true Causes of things ; this the Scripture teaches *Us* to ascribe to the all-seeing and all-directing Providence of God ; that we may *acknowledge Him in all our Ways* ; and be sensible of the True Author, from whom all the *Good* and all the *Evil* that befalls us, does either *mercifully* or *justly* proceed. Dan. iv. 35. *He doth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth ; and none can stay his hand, nor say unto him, What dost thou ?* When a person is slain by *Chance* or *Accident*, as men vulgarly speak ; the Scripture more accurately expresses it, saying, that God *delivered* such a one, *into the hand* of him that slew him without Design, *Exod. xxi. 13*. And in *all other* Instances, the same Notion is every where kept up in Scripture. *Prov. xvi. 33. The Lot is cast into the Lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord*. And when the Apostles chose by Lot a Successor to Judas, they expressed their Sense of the divine Providence in the following words, *Acts i. 24. Thou, Lord, which knowest the Hearts of all men, show whether of these Two thou hast chosen*. And Thus likewise in the words in the Text ; 'tis the supreme Superintendency of Providence over all Events, which

Solomon

So'mon meant to establish, when he saith, *Time and Chance happeneth to them All.*

NEITHER is it, (as Some, with very weak Pretences to Reason, have in this case been apt to Imagine ;) it is not, I say, merely in a *pious manner of Expression*, that the Scripture thus ascribes every Event to the Providence of God ; but 'tis *strictly and philosophically true* in Nature and Reason, that there is *no such thing as Chance or Accident* ; it being evident that those words do not signify any thing *really existing*, any thing that is truly an *Agent* or the *Cause* of any Event ; but they signify, *merely mens Ignorance* of the real and immediate Cause. And This is so True, that very many even of Those who have no Religion, nor any Sense at all of the Providence of God ; yet know very well, by the Light of their own natural *Reason*, that there neither is nor can be any such thing as *Chance*, that is, any such thing as an Effect without a Cause ; And therefore what Others ascribe to *Chance*, They ascribe to the operation of *Necessity* or *Fate*. But *Fate* also is itself in reality as *truly Nothing*, as *Chance* is. Nor is there in *Nature* Any Other *Efficient* or proper *Cause* of any Event ; (of any *Event*, I say : For concerning *Truths* in Themselves essentially, eternally and invariably necessary, I am not speaking : But of all the variable *Events* that happen in the Universe, there is and can be in Nature no other proper and *efficient Cause* ;) but only the *Free Will* of rational and intelligent Creatures, acting within the Sphere of their limited Faculties ; and the *Supreme Power of God*, directing, by his omnipresent Providence, (according to certain Wise Laws or Rules, established by, and entirely depending upon his

own good pleasure,) the inanimate Motions of the whole material and unintelligent World.

2dly, FROM the words of the Text I observe, that the all-directing Providence of God, which governs the Universe; does not superintend only the *Great Events* in the World, the Fates of Nations and Kingdoms; so that, without the direction of providence, the *strongest* and most numerous Armies are not victorious in *Battle*; but its Care extends, even to the Concerns of *single Persons*; so that, without the Blessing of *God*, neither *Riches*, nor *Favour*, nor any *temporal Advantage*, can certainly be obtained by any thing that *Man* can do: Nay, that even in matters of still *smaller* moment, not so much as a *Race* is gained by the *Swift*, without the hand of Providence directing the Event. When men observe how *Our* Attention is distracted with a multiplicity of Objects, and can very hardly be fixed on more than one thing at once; they are too carelessly apt to imagine, that Providence itself either cannot, or that 'tis beneath its Dignity to condescend, to interpose in the numberless small events of Nature or Chance. But the *Scripture* tells us otherwise, and *right Reason* also joins with it herein. For as *Chance* is nothing, so *Nature* also is nothing but an empty word. Every *Effect*, every *Event*, must have a *real Cause*; must proceed, immediately or mediately, from That which has a *True existence* and *Active Power*. And to an Omnipresent Mind, there is no more difficulty in attending to *every thing* at one and the same Time, than to *any one thing*. Not only *piously* therefore, but even with the *strictest* and *most philosophical Truth* of expression, does the *Scripture* tell us, that God commandeth the Ravens, 1 Kings xvii. 4; that they are *His* directions,

directions, which even the *Winds and the Seas* obey ; that he causes His *Sun* to rise on the *Evil* and on the *Good* ; that God prepared a *Gourd*, and a *Worm* to smite it that it withered, *Jonah* iv. 7 ; that God feedeth the *Fowls of the Air*, *Matt.* vi. 26 ; and, without Him, not a *sparrow* falls to the ground, *ch.* x. 29 ; Nay, that He clothes even the *Lillies*, and the *grass of the field*, *Matt.* vi. 30 ; and, with Him, the very *Hairs of our Head* are *All* numbered.

'Tis true ; All these things are plainly owing to *Second Causes*. And so likewise are all the greater *Instances* mentioned by *Solomon* in the *Text*. 'Tis as much according to the *Course of Nature*, that the *Strong* should sometimes lose a *Battle* by *Accident*, as that they should generally gain it by *Strength* ; and that *unforeseen Hindrances* should sometimes cause the *swiftest Runner* to lose the *Race*, as that *Agility and Nimbleness of Body* should make him generally win it. My

3d OBSERVATION therefore is ; that things being brought about according to the course of *Nature* by *Second Causes*, is not at all inconsistent with their being nevertheless *justly and truly* ascribed to the *Providence of God*. 'Tis *Time and Chance* says the *Text*, that happens to them *All* ; that happens frequently to prevent all the *Probabilities* there mentioned. The wise man does not hereby mean, that they are prevented by *Miracle* : For then he would not have used the vulgar words, of *Time and Chance*. Nor does he mean on the contrary, that they are prevented by *Blind and unintelligent Fate* : For this would have been contrary to the whole *Design of his Book*, and of all the rest of the *Scripture*, as well as to common *Reason* : But his Meaning is ; that the *Providence of God*, by means of

natural Causes, which are all entirely of *His* appointment, and *Instruments only* in *His* hand ; does often, for wise reasons in his government of the World, disappoint the most probable expectations. Ridiculous therefore is the Arguing of the Infidel and Irreligious ; who presently thinks himself secure of excluding the *Providence of God*, if he can but show a thing to be brought about by *Natural Causes*. Most ridiculous, I say, and ignorant, is this manner of reasoning : For, *what* are *Natural Causes* ? Nothing but those *Laws* and *Powers*, which God merely of his *own good pleasure* has implanted in the several parts of Matter, in order to make them *Instruments* of fulfilling his supreme Will. Which *Laws* and *Powers*, as he at *first* appointed them, so nothing but the same good pleasure of God continually preserves them. And they neither exist nor operate in any moment of Time, but by Influence and Action derived to them (mediately or immediately) from his all-governing Will. So that he foresees perpetually, what effect every Power and Operation of Nature tends to produce ; and could (if he thought fit,) exactly with the same Ease, cause it to produce a *different* Effect, as that which it Now does. From whence it follows inevitably, to the entire Confusion of Atheists, that all those things which they call *natural* Effects, are in very Truth as much the operation of God, (though perhaps not so immediately,) as even Miracles themselves. And to argue against *Providence* from the observation of the regular course of *natural Causes* ; is as if a man should conclude from the *uniformity* of a large and beautiful Building, that it was not the work of mens hands, nor contrived by any Free Agent, because the Stones and the Timber

were

were laid *uniformly and regularly*, in the most constant, natural, and proper Order.

4^{thly}, THE *Last* doctrinal Observation I shall draw from the Text, is ; that since the whole Course of nature in the ordinary method of Causes and Effects, and all those unexpected Turns of things which men vulgarly call Chance and Accident, are entirely in the Hand of God, and under the continual direction of His Providence ; it follows evidently, (and 'tis a Doctrine worthy the most serious consideration of all wicked Men,) that God can, whenever he pleases, even *without a Miracle*, punish the disobedient ; And no Swiftneſs, no Strength, no Wiſdom, no Artifice, ſhall in any manner avail, or inable them to eſcape the Vengeance, which even *Natural Causes* only, by the direction of Him from whom they receive their Nature, bring upon Offenders. He can puniſh by Fires and Famine, by Plagues and Peſtilences, by Storms and Earthquakes, by domeſtick Commotions or by foreign Enemies. He can, as *Moses* elegantly expreſſes it, make the *Heavens over Mens Heads Brals*, and the *Earth under their Feet Iron*, or the very *Beaſts of the Field* to riſe up againſt them : Or, as 'tis in the Book of *Wiſdom*, ch. v. 22, 23, 20. he can cauſe that a mighty *Wind ſhall ſtand up againſt them*, or the *Waters of the Sea ſhall rage againſt them*, and the *World ſhall fight for him againſt the unwiſe*. He can, by means of the leaſt *Accident*, as we ignorantly ſtile it, diſcomfit the greateſt Armies before a Few of their Enemies : As 2 Cbr. xxiv. 24. *The Syrians came with a ſmall company of men, and the Lord delivered a very great Hoſt (of the Iſraelites) into their band ; becauſe they had forſaken the Lord God of their Fathers*. Neither ſhall Any Swiftneſs deliver

them from the Pursuer : *Is. xxx. 16. Ye said, We will flee upon Horses ; therefore shall ye flee : And we will ride upon the Swift ; therefore shall they that pursue you, be swift : One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of One ; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee ; 'till ye be left as a Beacon upon the top of a Mountain, and as an Ensign on a Hill. Nay, without any visible external cause at all, to which such an Effect can be ascribed ; Providence can secretly blast, and insensibly cause to moulder away, the Greatest Power, Riches, or other worldly Advantages whatsoever : Ps. xxxix. 11. When thou with Rebukes dost chasten Man for Sin, thou makest his Beauty to consume away, like as a Moth fretting a garment ; every man therefore is but Vanity. And 'tis the exceeding Stupidity of profane Men, not to be moved hereby to repent, and give glory to the God of Heaven, who hath Power over these Plagues, Rev. xvi. 9. The Meaning of this whole Observation is, not that these Judgments are always certain Signs of God's displeasure against all the particular persons upon whom they at any time fall ; (for This our Saviour has expressly warned us against, as a most uncharitable Conclusion :) But whether they be Punishments for Sin, (as they generally, though not always, are ;) or whether they be only Trials of Mens Virtue, (as they sometimes are designed to be ;) or whether they be Means of weaning them from this transitory and uncertain World ; or whatever other Ends Providence brings about thereby ; still they are always Effects of the same All-wise divine Providence ; which ought to be acknowledged and submitted to as such, and whose Designs no Power or Wisdom of frail and vain men can oppose or prevent,*

THE *Practical Inferences*, arising naturally from what has been said, are as follows.

1st, If these things be so ; then let the greatest and most powerful of wicked men consider, that they have nothing in This World either to boast of, or to rely upon. *Jer. ix. 23. Let not the wise man glory in his Wisdom, let not the rich man glory in his Riches, neither let the mighty man glory in his Might : For all these Advantages are frequently defeated, and Time and Chance happeneth to them All. I will not trust in my Bow, saith the Psalmist, neither shall my Sword save me ; But it is Thou that savest us from our Enemies, Ps. xliv. 6.* Wise therefore was the Answer of the King of Israel, to an insulting message from the King of Syria, *1 Kings xx. 11. Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself, as he that putteth it off.* The Event showed, that his Admonition was reasonable ; And the Syrian's Pride, was but the immediate fore-runner of his Destruction. For the same purpose, it is recorded of *Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon*, that when his Greatness was grown and reached unto Heaven, and his Dominion to the End of the Earth, *Dan. iv. 22 ;* it was said unto him, ver. 25. *They shall drive thee from Men, and thy dwelling shall be with the Beasts of the Field, and they shall make thee to eat grass like Oxen, and they shall wet thee with the Dew of Heaven,* — ('tis the description of a very severe and mortifying Distemper of Mind ;) 'till thou know that the most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. This is the plain Design of Providence, in such extraordinary Events ; to bring men to an Acknowledgement, of Him on whom they depend ; to bring them to a right Knowledge, of God
and

and of themselves : That he may withdraw Man from his Purpose, Job xxxiii. 17. and hide Pride from Man.

Well (indeed) may *Pride* be said to be hid from Men ; when not only the Success of their greatest Advantages, but even their very *Life* itself, is uncertain every moment. *Boast not thyself of to-morrow*, Prov. xxvii. 1 ; *for thou knowest not what a day, what an Hour, may bring forth.* For as the *Fishes* that are taken in an evil Net, and as the *Birds* that are caught in the Snare ; so are the *Sons of Men* snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them, Eccles. ix. 12. The rich man in the Gospel, resolved to pull down his barns, and build bigger ; and then it was said unto him, ' Thou Fool, this night shall thy Soul be required of Thee. In the Days of Noah ; Men eat and drank, they married and were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark : And then the Flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise in the days of Lot ; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded : But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them All. And so also shall it finally be in the Great Day, when the Son of Man is revealed,' Luke xvii. 30.

2dly, If nothing happens in the World, without the divine Providence ; then good Men have a sufficient Ground of Trust and Reliance upon God, at all times and under All Dangers. Not, that God will *always* deliver them, or cause them to prosper in the present World ; For he often sees it better, to determine otherwise : But they may rely with assurance, that nothing can befall them but what *He* judges fit ; seeing all the Powers of Nature and of second Causes, are no-
thing

thing but Instruments in His hand, and under His direction. *Trust therefore in the Lord, with all thine heart, —and in all thy ways acknowledge Him,* Prov. iii. 5. He can save, whenever he pleases, 2 Cbr. xiv. 9, 11: and xvi. 8, 9. 1 Sam. xiv. 6. with many, or with Few; causing all the Accidents, which we call *Time and Chance*, to fulfil his Word, Ps. cxlviii. 8. and execute his pleasure: So that, if He thinks fit, even few shall be able to chase an hundred, and an hundred shall put ten thousand to flight, Levit. xxvi. 8. and Deut. xxxii. 30.

3dly and Lastly; FROM This Notion of Providence, may be given a plain and direct Answer to that Question of the profane Fatalist, Job xxi. 15. *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what Profit should we have, if we pray unto him?* Indeed, if the Course of Nature, and those things which we call *second Causes*, were independent upon Providence; there would be good reason to ask, what Benefit could there be either in Prayer or Thanksgiving. But if, as has been shown, Nature is nothing, and second causes are nothing, but mere Instruments; then it is very plain, that Prayer and Thanksgivings are as much due to God for whatever is brought about by *Natural* causes, as if he had done the Thing by any *Other instruments* instead of *These*, even by the most miraculous ones; Which, in That case, being no less constant, would have been no more miraculous than *These*.

10-11-12

SERMON XIV.

The Practice of Wickedness generally attended with great Evil.

[*An Inauguration-Sermon.*]

PROV. xiii. 21.

*Evil pursueth Sinners ; but to the Righteous,
Good shall be repaid.*

THE Parable which our Saviour spake concerning the Perverseness of the *Jews*, in finding fault equally on *Both* sides ; both with *John Baptist's* more *severe*, and with our Lord's own more *free* manner of Conversation in the world ; may be applied generally to almost *all* the Objections, which wicked and prophane men *at any time* make against Religion. No Reason, No Argument, No Method of Proceeding whatsoever, will satisfy prejudiced and corrupt Minds. *John the Baptist came, neither eating nor drinking*, Matt. xi. 18. That is, *He*, when he was sent to preach, came solitary in the Wilderness, with great Austerity and Severity of Life, with Fasting and Abstinence, with Mortification and Self-denial ; and they

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said,

said, he is Mad, and hath a Devil. On the contrary, *Christ* came to preach *without* this Austerity, in a more free way of Conversation; and they called him a Loose Person, a Glutton, and a Wine-Drinker, and a Companion of the worst of men. Upon This their Perverseness, our Lord compares those *Jews* to *froward and peevish children*, who do every thing contrary to what their Companions desire and expect: *Ver. 17. We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented: When others play and are cheerful, they will be sullen and ill-humoured; when others be sorrowful, they will laugh and mock.* But, after the Perverseness of Men has said and done all that it can; *Wisdom*, says our Lord, *is justified of all her children*; *Wisdom* will still vindicate itself, and appear to be *Wisdom*, in whomsoever it be found, and in what manner soever it be exercised.

THE Case is the Same in almost all other Instances, wherein prejudiced and corrupt minds are continually seeking Objections against Religion; Objections, contrary to and inconsistent with each other. Does Providence at any time bestow remarkable Blessings, upon virtuous and good men? Immediately from hence an Argument is drawn against Virtue, as if it lost the nature of Virtue, and became mercenary, by having respect unto the recompence of Reward. Most elegantly is This Objection set forth, in the first chapter of the book of *Job*; where *Satan* is represented as arguing before the Lord, *ver. 9. Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his House, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

ON the contrary ; Does Providence forbear to interpose in the present time, and reserve Judgment to the day of Retribution ? Then the Argument is turned ; and the Speech of the Scoffers is, *Where is the Promise of his Coming ? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation*, 2 Pet. iii. 4. Then they say, *It is vain to serve God ; and what Profit is it, that we have kept his Ordinance ?* Mal. iii. 14. Then they ask, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ? and what Profit should we have, if we pray unto him ?* Job xxi. 15.

THE Answer to Both, is easy and obvious. God's Forbearance at any time to interpose in the present State on the behalf of Virtue, is no Argument at all against the Benefit and Advantage of serving him ; because he is able to make abundant Recompence in the Life to come : Upon which account, excellent is the Advice of Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 17. *Let not thine heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the day long : For surely there is an end, (or, as we render it in the margin, surely there is a Reward,) and thine expectation shall not be cut off.* And on the other hand, the Rewards and Punishments which God distributes either in the present or in a future state, do not at all alter the Nature of Virtue, or make it in Any degree become mercenary : Because a man's Regard to his own Interest and Advantage is Then only Faulty, when 'tis a Temptation to him to do any thing that is in its own nature Evil ; not when 'tis in conjunction with the universal Right and Reason of things, and the Happiness of God's whole Creation.

MY Design at This Time from the words of the Text, is to represent and inculcate this great Truth,

that the *Practice of Righteousness* is mens *true Interest*, even in the *present Life* ; and that *Wickedness* is generally attended with *Great Misery*, even *Here* as well as *Hereafter*. *Evil pursueth Sinners* ; but to the *Righteous*, *Good shall be repaid*.

BEFORE I enter upon the particular explication of which Doctrine, there is One thing needful to be premised ; that the whole of what is to be said upon This Subject, must always be understood with an *exception* to the case of *Persecution* for Truth and Righteousness sake. For *all moral and universal Propositions* of this kind, expressing the *general Tendency* of things in their natural course, and the ordinary established Dispositions of Divine Providence ; are sufficiently verified, if they take place in all Cases where the *natural Order* of things is permitted to produce its *proper Effect*. When the Nature of things is perverted or over-ruled by any extraordinary Violence, an Exception must be made ; without any detriment to the Truth of the general Proposition. And of This sort is the case of *Persecution* for Religion. *Virtue*, in the *Nature of things*, and according to the *general Promise and Appointment of God*, is the Foundation and Cause of true Happiness among men. Yet the Perverseness of a wicked and corrupt World, may possibly load it, upon some particular Occasions, with the greatest Temporal Calamities ; and inflict the severest Punishments in their power, upon that which really deserves the Highest Commendation and Reward. In This case, the Best of men, if in This life only they had hope, might of All men become the most miserable. But Then, for this very Reason, God has promised them a Recompence in a *Future State* ; and herein they may rejoice, even not accepting Deliverance, that they may obtain a better Resurrection. Setting aside This case

case therefore, which is of peculiar consideration ; the Proposition I laid down, may evidently be shown to be a General Truth, that the *Practice of Righteousness* is mens True Interest, even in the *present Life* ; and that *Wickedness* is generally attended with *Great Misery*, even *Here* as well as *Hereafter*. *Evil pursueth Sinners ; but to the Righteous, Good shall be repaid.*

I, IN the First place : If we consider Mankind in general, in the largest and most extensive View, under the notion of that One universal Community, wherein St Paul considered them, when he told the *Athenians*, Acts xvii. 26. *God has made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the Face of the Earth* : Under This View, I say, 'tis very evident, that the Only thing which distinguishes Men from the *Wild Beasts of the Forest*, that devour each other according to their Strength, and have no Rights nor Property in any thing ; The only thing which distinguishes Men from these *Wild Beasts*, with regard to any True Happiness of Life ; is Religion, or a Sense of *Just and Right*, and of the Difference of *Moral Good and Evil*. For Reason, as to That part of it which denotes *Sagacity* only, or *Understanding*, separate from all Regard to *Moral Obligation* ; does only enable men, if they be wicked, more effectually, and with greater Skill, to torment and destroy each other ; and to have a deeper and more affecting and more lasting Sense of the *Miseries* they endure, than irrational Creatures are by their Nature capable of. 'Tis Reason, in that Other respect alone, as it implies a sense of *Moral Obligation*, (on which Religion is founded ;) 'tis This alone, on which depends all possibility of Happiness in Humane Life ; And to the degree of Influence which This has in the world, the Happiness Mankind enjoys above the *Wild Beasts of the Field*, is

always exactly proportionate. Did not therefore the Passions, the Ambition, the Covetousness, and other the like unnatural Vices of corrupt Minds, hinder this Reason and Moral Understanding, which is the peculiar Excellency and Glory of Mankind, from producing its natural and proper Effect in the world; the Earth would even in this present time, bating Mortality only, be that Scene of universal Happiness, which God hath promised shall take place hereafter in the New Heavens and New Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness. In the mean time, from this abstract View of the general Nature of Things and of the Consequences which would be the natural Result of universal Righteousness; 'tis apparent enough, to what Originals, to what Causes and Principles, the various degrees and proportions of Happiness and Misery, which are found in the present mixt and confused state of things, are justly to be ascribed.

II. Secondly, If we consider Mankind in a somewhat less general View; not in the universal abstract Notion, but in their more restrained political Capacity, as formed into particular distinct Nations and Governments: Under This View also 'tis no less evident, that the only possible Foundation of true and lasting Happiness to any Nation or People, as such; is the Practice of Righteousness and True Virtue. I insist not at present, in This Argument, upon the extraordinary Blessings which the Providence of God thinks fit at any time to pour down in a peculiar manner upon a Religious Nation; or the Judgments wherewith he sometimes punishes a degenerate people, turning a fruitful Land into Barrenness, for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein: But what I observe, is, that in the natural Tendency, in the regular and proper Consequence of mens own Behaviour;

behaviour ; Righteousness (as Solomon expresses it) exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any people. In proportion as Justice, and Order, and Truth, and Fidelity prevail ; creating mutual Love and Good-will, mutual Trust and Confidence among men ; which are the great Bands of Peace and Unity : In the same proportion is the Happiness of the Society, and the Welfare of the Publick evidently secured,

WHEN *Magistrates* rule in the Fear of God ; looking upon themselves as sent by Him for the Punishment of Evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well ; making use of all the Influence and Authority they are invested with, to promote Virtue, Righteousness, and Good Manners among men : When *Laws* are made with one continued View to the Good of the Publick ; and executed with Diligence, Equity, and Fidelity : When persons in all the relative stations of Life, perform faithfully and conscientiously the Duty of the respective Stations wherein they are placed : When *Bargains* are regularly contracted upon Terms of equitable consideration, and executed with Justice and punctual Veracity : When in every Exigence of common life, mutual Trust and Confidence, universal Benevolence and Good-will, are both the Spring or Motive, and the Rule or Measure of Action : There is no one so absurd as not to see, that there hence arises, in necessary, in evident, in immediate consequence, an Image of Publick Happiness, the most Lovely that the Mind of Man can possibly be presented with. An Image indeed only, which the Imagination may contemplate ; but which, in this present corrupt world, can never possibly have a Reality to answer it. Yet it shows abundantly the Truth of the Proposition I was to prove : Because whatever is, in its compleat Idea, of perfect Excellency ; is by neces-

sary consequence, in *every degree* of its *Reality*, of *proportionably good Effect*. So far therefore as Justice and Charity, and universal Virtue, prevails and is practised in Any Nation or Community; so far will That Community find those good Effects, which, were mens *Virtue perfect*, would be *perfect Felicity*. On the contrary: So far as Injustice, Tyranny, Fraud, Luxury, and other Vices, are encouraged in Any Society of men; so far will That Society feel certain degrees of those pernicious Effects, which, where Vice and Corruption arise universally to their highest Pitch, do unavoidably end in Total Destruction. The only possible *Delusion* therefore, by which men are continually tempted into unrighteous Practices, notwithstanding the evident perniciousness of such Practice in its most naturally consequent Effects; is their fondly and unreasonably imagining, that, what is undeniably ruinous to the *Whole*, may yet to *Themselves in particular* be *Advantageous*. And This I call a *Delusion*; not only upon account of the *Future Judgment*, which falls not within the compass of my present Argument; but 'tis a mere *Delusion*, generally speaking, with respect to the real and substantial Advantages even of this *present Life*. For, besides that whatever is in its natural consequence pernicious to the *Publick*, must probably by *that very means*, in the *course of things*, bring a due Punishment upon the *particular Offenders* themselves; 'Tis moreover still further true, without taking in *any* consideration of the *Publick at all*; 'tis, I say, still further true in the

III. *Third place*, That if we consider men *singly*, every one in his mere *private personal capacity*; still the only possible Foundation of real and lasting Happiness to a man even in *That View*, (always excepting,

as I before said, the case of Persecution,) is the Practice of Righteousness; Charity, Temperance, and universal Virtue. *Evil pursueth Sinners; but to the Righteous, Good shall be repaid.* The Truth of the Proposition, will most clearly appear in the *Particulars*.

THE *First Ground* and most necessary Ingredient of every Enjoyment in Life, and without which there can be no Relish of any other Enjoyment whatsoever, is *Health*. Now though God has indeed made all men mortal; and the *Best* are subject to *Infirmities and Diseases*, and the most vitious seem sometimes almost entirely to escape the natural consequences of their Vices; yet particular Instances, alter not the general Truth of Things; and *Virtue*, upon the whole, has undeniably the Advantage in this first foundation of Temporal Happiness. For *Sobriety and Temperance* certainly cause no Distempers, and *Debauchery* is notoriously the Cause of *Many*. With all justness therefore, are those general Declarations of Wisdom in Scripture: ‘My Son, forget not my Law, but let thy Heart keep my Commandments; (*Prov. iii. 1.*) For Length of days and long Life, shall they add to thee. Fear the Lord, and depart from Evil; (*ver. 7.*) it shall be Health to thy Navel, and Marrow to thy Bones. Length of days is in her right hand; (*ver. 16.*) she is a Tree of Life, to them that lay hold upon her.’ (*ver. 18.*) And on the contrary, concerning *Debauchery*, *Prov. vii. 26.* ‘She has cast down many wounded, yea, many young men have been slain by her: Her house is the way to Hell, (*that is, to the Grave untimely,*) going down to the chambers of Death.’

THE case is the very same likewise, with regard to the *External Advantages* of Life; such as are *Riches, Honour, Reputation*, and the like. It cannot indeed be denied,

denied, but that by *Oppression* and *Violence*, by *Unrighteousness* and *Corruption*, by *Deceit* and *Fraud*, immense *Riches* have been sometimes obtained, and seemingly a very great Superiority over the rest of Mankind. But if it be impartially considered, *how small a number in proportion*, have ever succeeded in This manner; *how many have been defeated and blasted in the Attempt*, before they could at all gain their Point; *how little, how uncertain, how vexatious, how interrupted the Enjoyment* has been, of those who have in This method had the greatest and most remarkable Success; and, after all, *how frequently, and in how short a time, the highest Prosperity of This kind has terminated in the heaviest Ruin*; it will undeniably appear, that the moderate proportion of the good things of life, gained usually by *Frugality, Industry, Honesty, and Integrity*; enjoyed with *Temperance, Contentment, and Security*; and, through the Blessing of God, *generally, (or at least much more often than the Wages of Unrighteousness,)* continuing permanent; are really and truly, in a right Computation and Estimate, even according to this present World, the most Substantial Riches. So that 'tis with great Truth, that *Solomon* affirms concerning *Virtue and Integrity* under the Name of *Wisdom*, Prov. iii. 14. 'The Merchandise of it is better than the Merchandise of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold: She is more precious than Rubies; and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her: Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour.' Nor is it without particular reason, that he here mentions *Honour* distinctly, as well as *Riches*. For though, with regard to *Honour also* as well as *Riches*, it is indeed undeniably true, that by *unrighteous, fraudulent, and corrupt*

rupt Practices, the Highest Honours and Dignities in the World have Sometimes been attained to; yet whoever impartially considers upon the whole, the Precipices upon which unrighteous Grandure stands; and compares it with that valuable and Lasting Esteem in the Eyes of the Best and Wisest part of Mankind, which is built upon the solid Foundation of Real and True Worth; will find, that 'tis in most perfect agreement with the Nature and Reason of Things, that the Scripture declares that 'the Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour; (Prov. xii. 26.) that the Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance; (Ps. cxii. 6. that the Memory of the Just is Blessed, but the Name of the Wicked shall rot;' (Prov. x. 7.) that the Wicked 'are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way,—and cut off as the Tops of the Ears of Corn,' Job xxiv. 24. And therefore the Advice of Solomon is entirely well-grounded, Prov. iii. 3. 'Let not Mercy and Truth forsake thee; bind them about thy Neck, write them upon the Table of thine Heart; So shalt thou find Favour and Good Understanding in the sight of God and Man.'

THERE is One Particular still behind, which contributes more to any man's Happiness even in this present Life, than all either Bodily Enjoyments, or External Affluence of Wealth and Honours; And That is, Inward Peace and Satisfaction in his Own Mind. Now in This Particular, there is no Pretence of Comparison, between the Righteous and the Wicked. Here, Virtue triumphs absolutely without Controul; and has no Competitor, to share or to contest with it the Enjoyment of the most valuable and most lasting Pleasures of Life. The case of Persecution itself, needs not here to be excepted.

cepted. Nay, even the *False Coin*, the very *Delusion*, the *imaginary Satisfaction* of the *merest Embusiasm*, has in *This respect* the Advantage over the *greatest Pleasures of Unrighteousness*. How much more, when the *Peace and Satisfaction of Mind* is built upon the most *solid Foundation*, upon the most *Rational and Real Grounds*! when 'tis founded upon a *Sense*, of having done what, in *itself* absolutely, in the *Nature and Reason* of Things, is *just and fit and right*! what, by *proper and natural consequence*, tends to the *Benefit of Mankind*, to the *Happiness of the whole Creation*! what renders a man as certainly *acceptable and well-pleasing* unto God, as 'tis certain the *World* is at all governed by such a *Wise, Just, and Good Being*! and what, consequently, in the last place, gives a man a *reasonable and well-grounded Expectation* of being *bappy hereafter*, when the *Enjoyments of This World* shall be no more! This is indeed, in the *Sense* of our *Saviour's Parable*, a *Pearl of great Price*; justly and highly magnified in numerous *Expressions of Scripture*. 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man, is peace,' *Pf. xxxvii. 38*. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and joyful gladness for them that are upright in heart,' *xcvii. 11*. 'Great Peace have they that Love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them,' *cix. 165*. 'Her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths are Peace,' *Prov. iii. 17*. 'The work of Righteousness is Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever,' *Is. xxxii. 17*. 'The wicked is driven away in his Wickedness, but the Righteous hath Hope in his Death,' *Prov. xiv. 32*. 'Tis true; sometimes *very pious and good persons*, have been extremely afflicted with *Trouble of Mind*: But *This Trouble* has never been the *Effect of Virtue*;

Virtue; and can with no more Justice be put to the Account of it, than Weeds which spring up among the choicest Corn, can be said to proceed from the good seed which was sown. *This Trouble* is always owing, either to some mistaken Notion of the Perfections of God, to some ill-grounded Fear, to some implanted Prejudice of Superstition, or to a real Sense of some past Sins; and therefore never arises from, but is only to be cured by, a right understanding of the *Nature and Effects* of True *Virtue*. In like manner abandoned and debauched persons, on the other side, seem indeed sometimes for a season, to have full *Ease* and Satisfaction in their Folly: But *This Ease*, never is the *Acquiescence of Reason*: 'Tis the *Stupidity* only, of a *Lethargy* or *Mortification*: Not at all a *Freedom* from the *Disease*, but merely a *Senseless*ness of the *present Destruction*. Sooner or later, *Reason* will be heard; and *Truth* will force itself upon them. 'For, what is the 'Hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his 'Soul?' *Job* xxvii. 8. I speak not here of the *Punishments* in a *future State*, but of the *Just Apprehensions* which attend Wickedness in the *present*. 'The 'Spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a 'wounded Spirit who can bear?' *Prov.* xviii. 14. And *Is.* lvii. 20. 'The Wicked are like the troubled Sea, 'when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire 'and dirt: There is no Peace, saith my God, to the 'Wicked.'

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SERMON XV.

The Character of oppressive Power in Religion.

[Preached on the 5th of November.]

DAN. vii. 23.

Which shall be diverse from all Kingdoms, and shall devour the Whole Earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

MY Design in This Place, is not to enter into a particular Interpretation of the Prophetick Language ; much less to propose any uncertain Conjectures, concerning the *Times* and the *Seasons* which the Almighty has put in his own Power ; but to consider only a *general Character*, which runs through a long Series of Prophecy both in the old Testament and in the New, of a certain great Power, formidable and lasting, of large *Extent* and of long *Duration*, and, in its *Nature* and *Kind*, different from all Other Powers and Kingdoms in the World. The Character is such,

as shows plainly one principal *End* and *Design* of the Prophecy to be This ; to give men repeated Warnings to take great Heed, that they neither fall (if possible) under the tyrannical Oppression of this dreadful Power, nor Themselves have any Share in exercising it over Others.

THE *Character* or *Description* given by the Prophet, of this *singular* and *extraordinary* Power, is in the following Words. (ch. vii. 21. ver. 25.) He shall make War with the Saints, and prevail against them: And he shall speak great Words against the most High, and shall wear out the Saints of the most High, and think to change Times and Laws ; and they shall be given into his hand for a long Season, even 'till the Judgment shall sit. (ver. 26, 27. ch. xi. 36, &c.) He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of Gods :—Neither shall he regard the God of his Fathers,—for he shall magnify himself above All ; —and shall divide the Land for Gain.

FROM this description given by the Prophet Daniel, is plainly taken the character St Paul sets forth, of a
 ‘ Man of Sin to be revealed, the Son of Perdition :
 ‘ (2 Theff. ii. 3, &c.) Who opposeth and exalteth him-
 ‘ self above all that is called God, or that is worshipped :
 ‘ So that He, as God, sitteth in the Temple of God,
 ‘ shewing himself that he is God :—Whose Coming
 ‘ is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and
 ‘ Signs, and Lying Wonders, and with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness : (1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.) Teach-
 ‘ ing men to give heed to seducing Spirits, and doctrines
 ‘ of * Devils :—Forbidding to marry, and command-

* Δαιμονίων, Souls departed, Saints.

‘ ing

‘ing to abstain from Meats, which God hath created to
 ‘be received with thanksgiving, of them which believe,
 ‘and know the truth.’

THE same character is likewise evidently intended by
 St John, when he prophesies of a *wild Beast*, or *Tyrannical Power*, to whom was given ‘Great Authority,
 ‘and a Mouth speaking Great things, and Blasphemies :
 ‘(Rev. xiii. 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17.)
 ‘And he opened his Mouth in Blasphemy against God :
 ‘And it was given unto him to make War with the
 ‘Saints, and to overcome them: And Power was
 ‘given him over all Kindreds and Tongues and Nations ;
 ‘And all that dwell upon the Earth shall worship him.
 ‘——And he——doth great Wonders,——and De-
 ‘ceiveth them that dwell on the Earth, by the
 ‘Means of those Miracles that he had Power to do.
 ‘And the Kings of the Earth have one Mind, and shall
 ‘give their Power and Strength unto the Beast ;——
 ‘even Peoples and Multitudes and Nations and Tongues.
 ‘(ch. xvii. 13, 15, 17.) For God hath put in their
 ‘Hearts [*in the Hearts of the Kings of the Earth*] to
 ‘fulfil his Will, and to agree, and give their King-
 ‘dom unto the Beast, until the Words of God shall be
 ‘fulfilled.’ The Name of the Person, in whose
 hands the *Reins* or *Principal Direction* of the Exercise
 of this Power is lodged, is *Mystery, Babylon the Great*,
 the *Mother of Harlots*, and *Abominations of the Earth* :
 (ver. 3, 7, 5, 2.) *With whom the Kings of the Earth*
have committed Fornication, (that is, have been led into
 idolatrous Practices,) and the *Inhabitants of the Earth*
have been made drunk with the Wine of her Fornica-
tion : And She herself is *drunken with the Blood of the*
Saints, (ver. 6.) and *with the Blood of the Martyrs of*
Jesus : (ch. xviii. 23, 24.) And by her *Sorceries* (that is,

artificial Methods of making men *Religious* without true *Virtue*,) *by her Sorceries are all Nations deceived : And in Her is found the Blood of Prophets, and of Saints, and of All that are slain upon the Earth. And This Person, (the political Person,) to whom these Titles and Characters belong, is That Great City, Rev. xviii. 18. standing upon seven Mountains, ver. 9. which Reigneth over the Kings of the Earth.*

'Tis hardly possible for any one carefully to read these Texts, as they lie in Scripture ; but he must immediately apprehend, if he has any historical Knowledge of the State of the World for many past Ages, that This Description was either *intended* to be a prediction of That tyrannical Power, which *Papery* in its most flourishing times established in the World ; or at least that it is as exact and complete a Picture of it, as could possibly have been drawn even *after* the Event. *Oppressive Powers* there have been Many in the World, by the righteous Judgment of God, both *Great* and *Lasting* : But *This* has been, after a most remarkable and wonderful manner, in its whole *Nature* and *Kind*, *different* from all *Other Powers* wherewith men ever were oppressed. According to the description given in my Text : ' *It shall be diverse from all Kingdoms, and shall devour the Whole Earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.*'

THE *Peculiarities*, wherein This Great Oppressive Power *differs* from all other Tyrannies which have been set up among men ; and is *diverse from all Kingdoms*, which have at any time devoured the whole *Earth* ; are principally These which follow.

1. 'Tis a *Religious* Tyranny ; a Power, sitting in the Seat and Temple of God. *Other Tyrannies*, founded originally in *Force*, and in the *Power of the Sword* ; have

have indeed frequently made use of Pretences of Religion, to support themselves *occasionally*; and no less frequently *laid aside* those Pretences again, when they had no farther occasion for them. But *This* is a Tyranny, founded originally upon mere matters of Religion; and carried on through its *whole* Progress, to the utmost length of an universal arbitrary Dominion, under the Name and Title still of a *merely Spiritual Authority*. The Church of Rome claims to be itself the *whole*, the *universal* Church of God; and to be invested with a *Power*, which indeed the *real universal* Church has no pretence to, even a Plenitude of *Divine Power*. By virtue of this Power, they have taken upon themselves to *change Laws and Times*; to establish what new *Doctrines* and *Practices* they pleased, under the name of Religion; *forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from Meats, which God hath created to be received with Thanksgiving*. Destroying mens plain and natural Notions of God, and of his *Worship*; and thereby undermining and making unintelligible the very *Foundation* of all Religion. Introducing *new, superstitious, and idolatrous Objects* of Worship; the *Elements* in the *Sacrament*; and the *Mother of Christ*, whom (by a *profane and blasphemous ambiguity*) they affect to stile the *Mother of God*; and even *Images, Pictures, and Statues* representing her. Giving heed to *seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Demons*; Doctrines, concerning the *Spirits of Saints departed*; and of *Saints, who were no Saints, but very Wicked men*; and of *Saints, who never lived nor had any Being at all*, but in the imaginations of deluded men: Invoking them, as *Mediators* and *authoritative Intercessors*; as invested with *miraculous Powers*, to protect *Men, Cities, and Nations*; and as having in

the *Court of Heaven* a corrupt Interest, to *skreen* their Devotees, even the most abandoned Sinners, from the *Wrath of him that sitteth upon the Throne*, from the Sentence of the righteous Judge of the whole Earth : To the utter Subversion of all real religion and virtue, and turning into Ridicule the essential and unalterable Difference of Good and Evil, and the Eternal Laws of God and Nature ; which are more immoveable, than the Foundations of Heaven and Earth. For, to dispense with Morality, and to indulge men in certain stated Equivalents of Ceremony, in the stead of real Virtue and Amendment of Manners ; is a Power, which even God himself has never claimed ; and the doing of which, would be (as the Apostle expresses it) to deny himself : (2 Tim. ii. 13.) 'Twould be a changing of his unchangeable Nature, and making himself to be what he is not. Yet He who styles himself *The Vicar of Christ*, has often claimed to Himself This Power ; and, in some Ages of the Church, has carried it so far, as even solemnly to absolve men from the Obligation of just and reasonable Compacts, and those too made and confirmed upon Oath ; merely to set them at liberty to be guilty of the most unjust and violent Oppressions, consistently with being very pious and religious persons. What is This, but opening his Mouth in Blasphemy against God, and speaking Great Words against the most High ? That is : Not in the way of professing Atheism, or openly defying the Name of Religion ; but by turning Religion itself into Superstition and Wickedness.

AND in order the more effectually to support this absurd and extravagant Power ; the Church of Rome has, by the Establishment of its New Doctrines and Practices, fenced itself in, and excluded absolutely out
of

of Communion all Christians who are not willing to *make void the Commandments of God through these Traditions of Men.* By which means, they have formed a violent *Schism* ; separating and dividing themselves totally from all Christians, who desire to *hold fast That Form of sound words*, that Doctrine which was once delivered unto the Saints by Christ and his Apostles, and which is now conveyed down to us in the Sacred Writings : And then they confidently reproach all those with the name of *Schismaticks*, who dare not join with them in this their *Great Schism*. Which is exactly the same thing, as if, in a *Civil Government*, a private Corporation should make *By-laws* contrary to the Laws of the Country ; and then confidently cast the reproachful name of Traitors upon all the rest of their Fellow-Subjects, who are not willing to involve themselves in the guilt of real Rebellion by submitting to those illegal *By-laws*.

IN consequence of this *Great Separation*, by which the Church of *Rome* has thus *bedged* itself in, and formed itself into a *Sect*, exclusive of and destructive to all such as desire to obey *God rather than Men* ; they have in all places, where-ever they have had Power, openly set themselves to destroy and extirpate, by all the Methods of Violence and Cruelty, all who would not *fall down and worship this Image which they have set up*. They have made *War with the Saints*, and prevailed against them, and worn them out. They have, by Courts of *Inquisition*, made it unspeakably more penal, to differ from them in any point of doctrine of mere humane invention, than to have been guilty of the most enormous Vices and Immoralities, in breach of the Eternal Laws of God. And whereas in all *Civil Governments*, where-ever there are any Remains of
Humanity,

Humanity, all Laws concerning Capital Crimes are so framed, as that it may be more possible for a *guilty* person to *escape*, than that an *Innocent* one should *suffer*; in *This* Kingdom, on the contrary, *diverse from all Kingdoms*, the Principle is; that *Millions*, not only of *Innocent* persons, but even of the *Best* and most *Virtuous* men, ought rather to be exposed to the extremest misery, and to Punishments cruel above the worst of Malefactors; than that any of *Their Doctrines*, however contrary to *All Sense* and *Reason*, should be permitted to be *examined* and *debated* whether they be true or no.

2. ANOTHER Instance, wherein This Great oppressive Power *differs* from other Tyrannies; is, that it has been raised and kept up, not by *Force* only, but by *Sorceries* and *Lying Wonders* peculiar to itself. By *Signs* and *Wonders* and *Lying Miracles*, which the Scripture calls the *deceivableness of unrighteousness*; (2 Th. ii. 9, 10.) by *These* have they imposed upon the *ignorant* and *credulous*. By numberless artificial Methods of making men very *Religious* without Any *Virtue*, which are what the Scripture calls *Sorceries*; by *These* have they drawn away the *Superstitious* and *Devout*. (Rev. xviii. 23.) By establishing a political Kingdom of Religion, *diffused* over many Nations, *independent* upon every Government, and yet at the same time closely and strongly *united* within itself, under the uniform direction of *One* foreign Power; by *This* have they gradually prevailed upon *the Kings of the Earth* to *have one Mind*, and to *give up their Kingdom*, their *Power* and *Strength* unto *the Beast*;—even *Peoples* and *Multitudes* and *Nations* and *Tongues*. (Rev. xvii. 13, 15, 17.) Which last Circumstance, points out to us still further, a

3. THIRD Instance, wherein this Great Oppressive Power differs from other Tyrannies: And *That* is, that 'tis a Tyranny set up over even *Remote* Princes, over all *Kindreds and Tongues and Nations*; (Rev. xiii. 7.) a Tyranny ruling over the *Kings of the Earth*, ruling in Places where it never had the least pretence of any *Civil Power* or *Authority* whatsoever. This is what the Scripture calls, *exalting himself above all that is called God*; above all *Magistracy, Authority, or Dominion*, that God ever instituted. (2 Th. ii. 4.) Disposing arbitrarily of Kingdoms: Absolving Subjects from their *Allegiance*, from all obligation to obey the *Laws* of their Country: And causing Kings and People, even whole Nations to be massacred, by secret Plots or by open Violences.

THIS is the Description and Character given in the prophetick parts of the inspired Writings, of a great and potent Apostacy, which was largely and very distinctly foretold should happen in the latter Ages of the Church. And the *Particularities*, wherein this Tyranny was to be *diverse from all Kingdoms* that ever devoured the whole *Earth*, are so singular and remarkable; that 'tis hardly possible for any man to mistake in judging, to *Whom* the Characters belong. What remains therefore, is to draw some *Observations* from what has been said, proper upon the *present* Occasion. And

First; WHEN St *John* saw this strange tyrannical Power represented to him in Prophecy, whilst as yet there was no such Power in being; When he saw it represented to him under the similitude of a *Woman* of fornications, that is, in Scripture-language, an idolatrous Church; riding upon *peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues*, (Rev. xvii. 15.) and domineering over the *Kings of the Earth*; *When I saw her*, says he,

I wondered with great Admiration, Rev. xvii. 6. And even after the Event, whosoever has *Any Notion* what *Virtue* or *Religion* is, must still of necessity wonder with great *Admiration*, how it was ever possible that the *Name of Religion* should be so prodigiously abused. *Religion* is not an arbitrary or imaginary thing, but founded upon eternal *Truth* and *Right*, or it never can have any Foundation at all. *Religion* is the Practice of *Virtue*, proceeding from a regard to *God the Judge of All*, the all-seeing and unerring Judge. *Good and Evil* are necessarily, essentially, and unalterably what they are : And God necessarily sees and judges them to be so. The *Worship of God*, and the universal *Love of our Neighbour*, are evidently the Perfection of *Moral Good* ; and the contrary to these, the greatest *Moral Evil*. Whatever *Forms* or *Ceremonies* therefore have at any time been instituted either of *God* or *Good Men*, they have always been entirely subservient to these *Moral Duties* : For *Moral Duties*, are the *End* and last Aim of *All Religion*, of all Religion both *natural and revealed*. What then must be thought of a Religion, filled with *Opinions* contrary to the necessary *Truth* and *Nature* of things ; over-run with *idolatrous Practices*, in the *Worship of God* ; and supported by *Wars*, *Persecutions*, *Massacres* ; by open *Violences*, and secret *Plots* ; opposite, in the most barbarous and cruel manner, to the whole Spirit of that great Duty of *Love and Charity* towards *Men* ! Ye shall know them by their *Fruits*, (Mat. v. 16.) said our Saviour ; admonishing his Disciples, to guard themselves against *False Prophets*. And when he warned them to beware of *Men* ; (Mat. x. 17.) he did not mean only of *Heathen Persecutors*, but of the *Brother* also delivering up the *Brother to Death*. (ver. 21.)

Secondly ;

Secondly; FROM what has been said, we may learn how sincerely Thankful we ought to be, for the happy Deliverance of the King and the Three Estates of this Realm, from the bloody intended Massacre by Gun-Powder, which was to have been effected as upon *This* Day.

Thirdly; FROM hence also we may learn to set a just Value upon the Greatness of that *Second* Deliverance, which God worked for us *again* as upon *This* Day, by the Happy Arrival of his late Majesty King *William*. They who rightly apprehend how *great* a Calamity it is, to be deprived of all Use of Reason and Conscience; to be obliged to profess in Belief the most absurd Impossibilities, and to comply in Practice with grossest Idolatries; and this under the Penalty of the most barbarous and inhumane Cruelties: All men, I say, who have a just Sense of the Dreadfulness of this Calamity, which is what the Scripture calls *The great Tribulation* *, and perpetually compares it to the ancient Captivity of God's people in *Babylon*; nay, files This, in comparison of the former, by the name of *Babylon the Great*; will not fail to be very sincerely Thankful, for the Deliverance of his Country from this severest of all Temporal Judgments; and very fearful of taking any even remote Step, that may tend towards bringing back so great a Destruction; and very solicitous to make the Government always easy in the Hands of such Princes, as are by Principle and by Inclination desirous to preserve all the Civil and Religious Rights of the Community.

Fourthly; The *Last* Inference I shall draw from what has been said, is; that we who profess the

* Ὁλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης, Rev. vii. 14.

Reformed Religion, and, upon stated Solemnities, pretend to return hearty Thanks to God for the wonderful preservacions of it amongst us; ought above all things to avoid *those corrupt Practices*, for which we so justly condemn the Church of Rome. *Protestants* must not hate the persons of *Roman-Catholicks*; nor uncharitably judge every *private* person among them to have That Malignity of Spirit, on which the *publick* Dominion of their Church is founded. *Protestants*, I say, must not hate the Persons of *Roman Catholicks*, or of any Others who differ from them: Much less ought we to offer them any Injury, Violence, or Wrong: But, on the contrary, we ought to endeavour to convince them of their Errours, by *Strength of Reason*, and by *Gentleness of Behaviour*. If a man's Practice be *vitious* and *injurious* to his Fellow-creatures; what Religion he professes, imports little more to his *Moral* character, than the *Shape* or the *Colour* of his *Cloaths*. What matters it in point of Religion, to detest the *Violences and Persecutions* of Rome; if men still continue Lovers of *Violence* and *Contention*? What matters it in point of *Truth*, to have rejected the *unintelligible Doctrines* of Rome; if men still continue fond of *unintelligible Notions*? What matters it in point of *Virtue* and *real Goodness*, to have departed from the *Superstitious Practices* of Rome; if men will still be fond of *Superstitious Practices*? The Religion of *Christ* consists, in the Worship and Love and Imitation of God, and in universal Charity and Good Will towards Men. The One of these, is *the First and Great Commandment*; and the Other, says our Lord, is like unto it: And on *Both* of them, depend *the Law and the Prophets*, and the Perfection of the Gospel of *Christ*. If

Protestants

Protestants at any time depart from This Principle, they depart from their Profession: And whensoever they do so, they justly provoke God to deliver them up again into That Darkness, from whence they have escaped; and into the Power of That Tyranny, from which they have often been so marvellously delivered.

S E R M O N XVI.

Providential Deliverances from Slavery.

[*Preached on the 5th of November.*]

P S A L. xxxiii. 10.

*The Lord bringeth the Counsel of the Heathen
to nought ; he maketh the Devices of the
People of none Effect.*

THIS Psalm, is a Psalm of praise and Thanksgiving, upon the Subject of God's works of Creation and Providence ; and the royal Author of it, seems in his enumeration of the Works of God, to equal the Wonders of *Providence* with those of *Creation*. *Ver. 6.* ' By the word of the Lord were the
' heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath
' of his mouth ; he gathereth the waters of the sea
' together as an heap, he layeth up the depth in store-
' houses ; Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the
' inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him ; for he
' spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood

‘fast: The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen
 ‘to nought, he maketh the devices of the people of
 ‘none effect.’

THE reason why the Psalmist thus joins the works of Creation and Providence together, as equal Subjects of Praise and Thanksgiving, was the many wonderful *Deliverances* which God had worked for the Nation of the *Jews in general*, and (if this Psalm be *his*) for the person of *David* in particular; many of which Deliverances were so extraordinary and remarkable, that they could not possibly have been brought about, but by the peculiar influence of that divine Providence, which mightily over-rules all things; the Designs of the Enemies having sometimes been laid with such *Secrecy*, and sometimes carried on with such *strength*, that all Hopes from natural causes ceasing, it seemed that no less Power, than that, which as it *created*, so it *governs* all things, could be able to disappoint them. Wherefore the Psalmist having declared the Weakness and Insufficiency of all other Causes, and the Uncertainty of all other Hopes which men usually depend upon, concludes, ver. 12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*

Now, excepting some *few* cases, wherein God exerted his Almighty Power in plain and undisputed *miracles*; the Deliverances which Providence has worked at several times for *this our* Nation from the professed Enemies of its Religion and Liberty, have been in no wise inferior to the greatest Deliverances that God ever vouchsafed to the Nation of the *Jews*. We need not search for other instances, nor mention the many Examples, which cannot but offer themselves to every one's thoughts. The Two great Deliverances which we

This

This Day commemorate, and are met together to return thanks to God for, are alone abundantly sufficient to make good the Observation. For whether we consider the difficulty and small probability there was, of preventing the Designs laid against our Religion and Liberty ; or whether we consider the greatness of the Calamities that would have ensued, had those Designs took effect ; or the greatness of those Blessings, which through the Mercy of God did follow upon their being disappointed ; I believe we shall not meet with any Event in History, wherein the Providence of God can seem more visibly to have concerned itself, or to have given more evident Marks of its governing and overruling all things. Had that secret Treason, which was carried on in Darkness where no Eye saw it, been as successful as it was secretly contrived ; and the Glory and Flower of the Nation been permitted to fall at once by the black malice of Implacable men ; the Reformation of our Religion, and the wise Constitution of our Government had perished together ; and what unspeakable Confusion would have succeeded that dreadful Blow, no mortal can tell. In like manner, had the later Designs which have since been carried on against this Nation, to subvert our Laws and extirpate our Religion, been permitted by the unsearchable Judgment of God to have prevailed and taken effect ; we had once again exchanged Religion for Superstition, and well-constituted Government for Tyranny ; and together with Us had perished the Liberties of all *Europe*. But though the First of these Attempts was managed with so much Caution and Secrecy, as seemed to secure it from being discovered by any humane Wisdom ; and though later Designs were carried on with such advantages of Power, and such appearance of Authority,

as made the Enemies of the Name of Protestant, think it impossible they should be disappointed ; yet Providence did so discover the *one*, as to convince the world that there is no Darknes nor Shadow of Death where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves ; and so prevented the *others*, by the seasonable Coming of his late Majesty of happy Memory ; as to show that with God 'tis all one to save by Many or by Few ; who *breaketh the arm of the wicked, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty, and delivereth the poor from him that is too strong for him.*

BUT it will be proper to speak more *distinctly* and *particularly* of this matter, when we come to apply the *general* Observations which I shall raise from the Text, to the *Special* occasion of our assembling This Day ; in some useful and practical Inferences from the whole Discourse.

THE Observations therefore, which may first be raised *in general* from the words, are these : *1st*, That the Providence of God presides over and governs all things, and has a peculiar Influence upon all the great Events that happen unto Men. *2^{dly}*, That This, as it is observable in all the great periods of every particular man's Life, so it is more especially and remarkably true, in respect of such Events, wherein the Fates of whole Nations and Kingdoms are concerned : *The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, he maketh the devices of the people to be of none effect.*

I. *First* ; THE Providence of God presides over and governs all things, and has a peculiar Influence upon all the *great Events* that happen unto Men. Upon all the *Great Events*, I say ; not to exclude Providence from regarding even the *smallest* things as well as the *greatest*, but because These are easiest and most useful

for *Us* to observe ; and in These the Footsteps of Providence may with more certainty be traced.

THERE was a certain Sect among the Ancient Philosophers, who though they pretended to believe the Being of God, yet they denied his particular Providence and Inspection over all Events ; and the Actions and Contrivances of many who call themselves Christians, however contrary their Profession may be, give but too just occasion to place them in the same rank. These men thought that the Life of God consisted merely in Rest and doing nothing ; and that he had no regard to the Events of Things, or the Actions of men on Earth ; but left all to be managed by the Chance or the Fate of Second Causes : They thought, and so far indeed very justly, that God could not but be an infinitely happy Being, perfectly free from all that Care and Labour, that Toil and Anxiety, which makes a great part of the Misery of humane Life : But must he therefore be a mere *unactive* Being ? Cannot he with the same Ease wherewith he *made* the World, a work of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Counsel, *govern* it also and preside over it ? Cannot he who at one View sees and observes all things that are done in the world, concern himself for the Benefit and Well-government of his Creatures, without diminishing from his own infinite Happiness ? especially since Happiness consists, not in doing nothing, but in doing good ; and infinite Happiness is nothing else, but the perfectest exercise, of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. To see and to know all things that are done in the world, is a natural and necessary Attribute of an Omnipresent Mind : To rule and order all things which are present before him, cannot but be infinitely easy to Almighty Power ; and nothing
can

can be more absurd, than to suppose that God being thus necessarily every-where-present, and seeing all things, and being thus infinitely able to determine all Events according to his own Will, should yet be only a careless and unconcerned Beholder of them. 'Tis Evident therefore from Reason, that the Providence of God *can* and *must* govern and over-rule all things. And that it *actually* and *in fact* does so, the whole *History* and *Doctrine* of the Scripture abundantly confirms to us. It shows us by numberless Instances, that God has not only upon *special* occasions made use of the Power of *Miracles* for the Preservation of the Righteous, or the Destruction of the Wicked, but that *generally* he governs the Moral World, by providentially directing Natural Causes and Influences, to effect what he determines should be done: That he rewards or punishes men by wholesome or pestilential Air, by fruitful or barren Seasons; that he promotes or disappoints their Designs by the uncertain Changes of Winds or Weather; that he employs and directs Influences of Nature to overthrow the most powerful Armies, to defeat the wisest Counsels, to determine the Differences of Princes, and the Fates of Men and Kingdoms: That the unsearchable Wisdom of Providence directs and steers the most casual and accidental Events, to change the Fortunes of Men, and disappoint the most proper and natural means of Success; so that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but that Time and Chance, directed by the Providence of God, happens to them all.* Nay further, the Scripture teaches us, that God not only directs natural Causes and overrules the Actions of men to fulfil his own good pleasure,

sure, but moreover influences mens minds by strange Concurrences of external causes, or by other more secret and unknown ways, to bring about just Events : That he comforts good men and supports them in their Designs ; that he terrifies bad men with strange Amaze-ments, to discover their own Conspiracies, and to fall into the Snares which they had secretly laid for others ; that ' he frustrateth the tokens of liars, and maketh ' diviners mad ; turneth wise men backward, and mak- ' eth their knowledge foolish : that a man's heart ' deviseth his ways, but the Lord directeth his steps : ' *that* there are many devices in the heart of man ; ' but the counsel of the Lord, That shall stand : *and* ' *that* the heart of the Prince is in the hand of the ' Lord ; as the rivers of waters, he turneth it whi- ' thersoever he willeth.'

By these and numberless other passages, illustrated with many historical Examples, which no man can read the Bible without observing, the Scripture assures us that the Providence of God governs and directs the Events of all things. It remains only to consider, how this Doctrine agrees with our present Experience of things, and is consistent with that fixt course of Natural Causes, which God seems to have established in the world. And here indeed lies the great Difficulty of all ; since men do and cannot but observe, that where Miracles are not wrought, God suffers the World to be governed by the natural Operations and Efficacy of Second Causes. Most things go on in a regular and settled course ; and diligent men by studying the Nature of things, and the ordinary Series of Causes, have been able in most Events to discover the Connexion of the Cause with the Effect. Hence men of Understanding and Industry, foresee
very

very many Events ; and by ordering their Affairs accordingly, secure to themselves in most of their Designs a great probability of Success. And even where Things do not succeed according to the Probabilities of known Causes, but are disappointed or changed by strange intervening Accidents, or sudden and unexpected Turns of things ; yet even There it appears generally that the Alteration proceeds from some equally natural, tho' not timely foreseen Cause. When *the Race is not won by the Swift, nor the Battle by the Strong*, as it ought to be in the ordinary course of things ; yet even in such a case men are generally able to discover, that the unforeseen Accidents which altered the course of things, and prevented the expected Success, were the Effects of some Natural Causes, which ought to have been taken into the Estimate, and would, if men could have attained a perfect knowledge of the whole Natures and Powers of things, have entirely changed their Expectations of the Success. Thus the Discovery of This Day's wicked Conspiracy, was owing to a strange series of Accidents, which though utterly impossible to be foreseen by humane Wisdom, yet, after the Event, appeared not to have any thing in them absolutely above the power of Nature : And our Deliverances from later Attempts against our Religion and Laws, were not strictly Miracles, but plainly owing on one hand to the ill management of our Adversaries, and on the other hand to the Wisdom and Conduct of his late Majesty.

If then things be acknowledged to be Thus, the Difficulty is, how the Interposition of Providence is reconcileable with this Regularity of the Operations of Natural Causes ; and why (as the Scripture plainly determines) we are bound with all Thankfulness to ac-

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knowledge the Goodness of the Divine Providence in working for us such Deliverances, which yet we do not at the same time believe to be properly and strictly miraculous. Now tho' to This it might perhaps be answered (as some learned men have done) that the All-wise Creator of the World, when he fixt the present Laws and appointed the constant course of Nature, foresaw at the same time all the Dispositions and Exigencies of men, and therefore accordingly so ordered the series of Natural Causes, as to make the very same Provision for all these Occasions in the original Constitution of things, which he would otherwise have done by the miraculous Interposition of his Providence: Though, I say, it might perhaps silence this Objection, to say that the Constitution of the natural World was so settled upon God's foresight of the Dispositions of the Moral, as that the Justice and Goodness of Providence must equally be acknowledged in all the great Events of Nature, as in miraculous Operations; and this Observation might perhaps be of great use against the Asserters of Fate: For, as 'tis no objection against the Skill of the *Workman*, to say that every Wheel of a Watch is moved only naturally according to the frame of its parts; so 'tis no Objection against *Providence*, to say that things are brought about by Second Causes, since 'tis God who is the Author of those Causes: Yet because the Scripture every where plainly teaches that God *actually* interposes in the Government of the World; and because 'tis a more honourable Notion of God, to suppose him constantly inspecting and ruling all things, than that he should have fixt certain unchangeable Laws of Nature, and then left the World to be governed by them as by Fate; therefore in answer to this Difficulty about the Work-

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ings of Providence, it is more reasonable to say, that as God must be acknowledged to have upon some great occasions made *such* Alterations in the visible course of Nature, as we call *Miracles* ; so he does at other times, at least so govern and manage the first Springs of Natural Causes, as to bring about, though without any visible Alterations of Nature, whatever his infinite Wisdom sees fit. And this is so far from being contrary to true Philosophy, or inconsistent with the State of Nature and the regular Appearances of Things, that the best Philosophy that ever yet appeared in the world, has not to this day determined, whether the first Springs of the commonest and most universal Operations of Nature, be moved by some general laws impressed by God on Matter, or whether even in These things he does not continually employ the Offices of intelligent Beings : Or rather, it *has* determined, that God is immediately the Author, even of all those we call *Natural*, as well as of Miraculous Events. For to cause either the Sun or the Earth to move, is plainly an Effect of the same Power, as to cause them to stand still ; and the only reason why men usually look upon One as the immediate hand of God, and the Other they fancy is done without Him ; is no other but This, that what God does Once, they cannot but acknowledge is done by *Him* ; but what He does Always, they therefore childishly think 'tis not *He* does it at all. But However This be, yet to be sure nothing can be more reasonable than to say, that God, upon whose good pleasure all the Laws and Powers of Nature perpetually depend, does at least in some great Events determine the Influences of Natural Causes to produce such or such particular Effects. Thus much we see God has put even in the Power of *Men*, that by skilful and ar-

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tificial Application of Causes, they can in many Instances determine the natural Powers of things to produce such Effects, as they would not naturally have produced without that guidance and direction of Art : And nothing can be more absurd, than to imagine that God does less in the Government of the World, than even some of the meanest of his Creatures are able to do. When therefore we see Natural Causes conspire strangely and by a long series to produce some remarkable Event ; we have all the reason in the world, to believe that thing brought about, by the peculiar direction of Providence ; and to behave ourselves accordingly in our Prayers or Thanksgivings to God. Thus we have all possible reason to believe, that the Wisdom of Providence directed that train of Accidents, by which the Great Conspiracy of This Day was discovered : And that the same Wisdom and Power since worked for us those later Deliverances, in consequence of which we still enjoy our Religion and Liberties ; and governed the Springs of the first causes of the Winds and Weather and of numberless other Circumstances of things, on which depended the Success of his late Majesty's Enterprize ; in consequence of the Success of which, we still enjoy our Religion and Liberty, the happy Effects of that seasonable and necessary Revolution, which cannot without the greatest *Ingratitude*, but be acknowledged with all Thankfulness, to have been the immediate Work and singular Blessing of Providence. For

II. *Secondly* ; As this Direction of the first Springs of Natural Causes by the Providence of God, is to be observed and acknowledged in all other considerable Events ; so does it more especially and remarkably discover itself in the accomplishment of such Events, on

which the Fates of whole Nations and Kingdoms depend. It must indeed be confessed, as I have already observed, that the smallest things of all, are no less truly Objects of the Care of Providence, than the greatest; that *without our heavenly Father*, not so much as *a sparrow falls to the ground, or a hair of our head perishes*: And 'twas a very unworthy Notion of God in some Philosophers to imagine, that whilst he governed Kingdoms, he could not at the same time attend to the guidance and direction of smaller things. But in respect to *Us*, the Effects of Providence are more *considerable*, and the Footsteps of it are more easily traced, and the Events which it produces require greater and more publick Acknowledgments, when the Fates of whole Nations are therein concerned. There is *one* reason also in the *Nature of things*, why Providence should more visibly concern itself with what whole Nations and People are interested in; and That is, that particular Persons are to have their exact and particular Retributions in a future State; but great Conspiracies, and overflowing Tyrannies, considered as such and in a Body, must have their defeat in this world; and National Blessings must of necessity be Temporal: Not indeed for any necessity on account of strict *Justice*; (because *That* may as well be satisfied in the Life to come;) but for the publick manifestation of Providence to the World, and of God's immediate Judgments in the present State.

BUT the Time will not permit me to enlarge farther on this head. I shall therefore only apply briefly what has been said, to our present Occasion, and so conclude.

AND here I need not detain you with a particular Narrative of the dark Conspiracy which was designed

ed to have been executed as upon This Day : I need not aggravate the incredible Barbarousness of this Attempt, which is not to be paralleled in all the Histories of Time, and which a great many even of the Romish Communion have themselves been ashamed of and desirous to disown : I need not represent the great Craft and Cunning wherewith this Design was laid ; undiscoverable, as they thought, by any Wisdom or Chance : *They took crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy bidden ones ; they said Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance, Ps. lxxxiii. 4.* I need not repeat to you with what Secresy this whole matter was carried on ; so that the words of David are most fitly applicable to this Occasion. *Pf. lxiv. 5. They shoot in secret at the perfect, they encourage themselves in an evil matter, they commune of laying snares privily, they say Who shall see them ? and ver. 6. They search out iniquities, they accomplish a diligent search ; both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart is deep.* It would also be superfluous to give a particular account how this Conspiracy was discovered ; how God shot at them suddenly with a swift arrow, and their own tongues made them to fall ; how (as the wise man expresses a like matter, Eccles. x. 20.) a Bird of the air carried the voice, and that which has wings discovered the matter. For all these transactions have been often fully and lively represented to you, and 'twould be but tedious to repeat them again.

I NEED not likewise enlarge upon the particulars of the second Deliverance, which we this Day commemorate. The thing itself is still fresh in all our Memories ; and every one that has any just Sense of the inhumane Barbarity of the Popish religion, and of the

extreme wickedness of that great Apostacy so largely prophesied of in the New Testament, cannot but be sensible of the *Greatness* of every escape from it, being a Deliverance from the worst and most dreadful Slavery both of body and mind ; together with the *Strangeness* of the means by which it was brought about, and the *Suddenness* and *Easiness* of its Accomplishment.

OMITTING therefore to repeat things already so well known, I shall choose rather to conclude my Discourse with some practical Inferences suitable to the Occasion. And

1st ; If the Providence of God has certainly a peculiar influence over all the great Events that happen to Mankind ; and if the Blessings and Deliverances which we this day commemorate, carry upon them as visible characters of that divine Providence, as any that were ever bestowed upon any People ; then ought the expressions of our Acknowledgments and Thanksgivings to God upon this occasion, to be proportionably great and fervent. That in *the general* the Providence of God has a peculiar Influence over all the great Events that happen to Mankind, I have endeavoured to prove in the fore-going Discourse ; and that the Deliverances we this Day commemorate *in particular*, carry upon them as visible characters of that divine Providence, as any thing less than a direct Miracle can possibly do ; is evident from all the circumstances of their accomplishment. For if the Strangeness of events be compared with the ordinary course of things ; if the disproportionateness of means and causes to their effects ; if weakness triumphing over formidable Strength, and Successes unusual like those recorded in Scripture ; if the disappointment of the greatest cunning, and infatuation of the profoundest Politicians ; if the discovery
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of the secretest and most cautious Plots, by improbable means, and unaccountable accidents ; if bringing to nought the greatest and best laid enterprizes, at the very point of their being put in execution ; if wicked mens insnaring themselves and blowing up their own designs, involving themselves in the Calamities which they designed for others ; in a word, if *turning wise men backward, and making their knowledge foolishness ;* if confounding the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprize ; if taking the *wise in their own craftiness,* and turning down the counsel of the forward headlong ; if all these things, I say, be tokens of Providence interposing in any great event ; then are This day's Deliverances certainly of that kind. Thus was *Pharaoh* overwhelmed, when he had just overtaken the Children of *Israel* ; Thus did *Haman* perish, when he had procured a royal decree, and had fix'd a time to destroy the *Jews* ; And thus were numberless other designs, mentioned in Scripture, disappointed by strange, and to human Wisdom unaccountable Providences. Let us then acknowledge the hand that worked these things for us, and express our acknowledgments in suitable Thanksgivings : Let us declare *God's works*, that is, publicly glorify his special Providence, and celebrate his adorable perfections displayed in such extraordinary events ; and provoke others to consider and do the same ; that men may praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ; that they may offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and declare his works with gladness ; that they may speak the glorious honour of his might, and of his wondrous works ; that they may declare the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his terrible acts. Let us trust and place our Affiance in

God, who hath done so great things for us already whereof we rejoice ; and learn from the consideration of former mercies, to rely upon Providence for Deliverance in future Dangers. Thus the Psalmist, when he had praised God for past Deliverances, saying ; *Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us over for a prey unto their teeth ; Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, the snare is broken and we are escaped ;* immediately he adds in the next words ; *Our help, that is, our Trust and Dependence for the future, is on the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

2dly, Since God hath already vouchsafed This Nation so many and great Deliverances from the Attempts of Popish Superstition and Cruelty, we ought to be greatly careful to prevent the spreading of that Superstition, that we again feel not the Effects of its Cruelty. That which was spoken by *Exra* upon a like occasion, may most fitly be said by *Us*, at this time, *Exra ix. 13. After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverances as these ; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations, wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping ?* It highly behoves us therefore to be very vigilant in preventing the growth of that Superstition, which this Nation hath already so often felt the ill Effects of ; and to be diligent in endeavouring to reclaim Those who have been seduced by it, or have been unhappily educated in the Prejudices of it. God has indeed by great Deliverances freed this Nation from the immediate and imminent
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Dangers of its prevailing Cruelty ; but there are still great Remains of That Superstition in the Nation ; and it has by great Industry even to This Day been so propagated amongst us, that our Superiors have almost every year been obliged to consider of new means to prevent it, and to recommend to all such as have any opportunity, to endeavour heartily the putting a stop to it. The *first* means that we should use to this purpose, is to endeavour to convince them, with all meekness of Temper, that the Doctrines of *Rome* are not the Doctrines of Christianity ; and to demonstrate to them by the Influence it hath upon our Lives and Practice, that *our* Religion is better than *theirs*. Our very keeping up the Remembrance of This Day, is a sufficient Testimony, how contrary to the Spirit of Christianity and how utterly unjustifiable we account that Zeal, which under pretence of Religion subverts even common Humanity, and destroys Mens Lives which Christ came into the World to save : And nothing can be more proper to convince good and well-meaning Persons of the Error of That way, than to show them visibly how much the Principles of the Reformed Religion are more agreeable to the common Design of Religion and to the Spirit of Christ, than the Doctrines of *Rome* are. But above all, the greatest and most effectual means that we can possibly use to prevent the growth of Popery and Superstition, is to be infinitely careful not to run into that Atheism and profane Libertinism, which is the contrary extreme to Superstition. For as unreasonable Superstition enslaves the Minds of men, and makes them so uneasy under the yoke, that they often fly off into the contrary extreme of Irreligion and Profaneness ; so the natural Effect of Profaneness, when men see the intolerable

ble Consequences and Mischiefs of it, is to drive weak Minds into the other extreme of Superstition. If therefore while we fly from the Superstition of Popery, we run into the Contempt of *all* Religion; that profane Libertinism will probably terminate in Popery again.

WHEREFORE 3dly and to conclude, If we desire to have the Blessings of those Deliverances, for which we This Day return our publick Thanks to God, continued amongst us; let us make our selves capable and fit to enjoy them, by a holy and worthy Conversation: Let us in Meekness and Peace live agreeably to the Laws and to the Spirit of that Reformed Religion, which God has mercifully restored and still continues to us: For it is no advantage to us to be delivered from the tyranny of Superstition, if we run into the madness of Atheism and Irreligion. There are not wanting Enemies, who are yet watchful against us; and the Judgments of God are still abroad in the Earth. And we have always just reason to fear, that if we repent not in time, and behave ourselves worthily under past Deliverances, God may yet be forced to try us with heavier Calamities, than any that have hitherto come upon us. But if we every one heartily set about a Reformation; he that would have spared *Sodom* for the sake of *ten* righteous persons, and *Jerusalem* for the sake of any *one* man that had but executed Justice and Judgment in it, may be prevailed upon still to avert the Judgments that threaten this our sinful Nation. But if we cannot be so happy as always to obtain Mercy in the Preservation of our *Country*, yet he that is truly religious shall be sure not to fail of it in the Safety of *himself*. Righteous men, such as *Noah*, *Job*, and *Daniel*, though possibly they may not be able to deliver a sinful City which God has doomed to Destruction,

Destruction, yet shall not fail to deliver their own Souls : And he that sincerely repents and reforms his Life, shall at least have the comfort of attaining that Peace, which the World cannot give, and which it cannot take away.

Now unto him who hath from time to time delivered us from the merciless Designs of wicked and unreasonable men ; who did as upon this day rescue us from that dreadful Destruction which was ready to have swallowed us up ; and who still brings to light the hidden things of Darkness, and preserves our Religion and Rights to us, in despite of all the malicious and restless Attempts of our Adversaries ; Unto him who hath delivered us, and doth deliver us, and we trust will still deliver us, be all Honour, &c.

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SERMON XVII.

Of the Duty of Charity.

[*A Charity Sermon.*]

MAT. V. 48.

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father
which is in Heaven is perfect.*

I SUPPOSE there is little need of premising in this place, that by being perfect like God, is not here meant a perfection of degrees, but only a similitude or imitation in kind. The highest attainable Perfections of the most excellent creatures in the Universe, are infinitely mean and imperfect in comparison of God, who *chargeth even his Angels with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his Sight.* How much more weak and of no value, must the best performances of frail, mortal, and sinful Men, of necessity be! But though all we can possibly do, must needs fall infinitely short of our most perfect pattern, yet we are indispensably obliged to be like it in our proportion, and according to our capacity; and as a finite *can* resemble infinite, so we are to resemble God, by partaking of the same excellencies in kind, though they cannot but be infinitely inferior

inferior in *degree*. A Candle, though its Light bears no proportion at all to the Light of the Sun, yet it resembles it nevertheless in giving Light ; whereas Darkneſs is directly contrary to Both : So the Virtues of Angels and of Men, though they bear no proportion at all to the adorable Perfections of God, yet they reſemble them nevertheless in being of the ſame nature and kind ; whereas wickedneſs is in its whole kind a State of contrariety, oppoſition and enmity. A perfect and moſt complete example is ſet before us for our imitation, that aiming always at that which is moſt excellent, we may grow continually, and make a perpetual Progreſs in the ways of Virtue ; and though we can never come up to our pattern itſelf ; yet it is ſufficient that we may juſtly be ſaid to become *like* unto God, when, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, we are *made partakers of the Divine Nature* ; And ſuch Imitation of God, as our frail and mortal nature is capable of, is truly and in a proper Senſe the comparative Perfection of our *Human nature*, as abſolute Perfection is the Perfection of the *Divine*.

THIS may ſuffice for explication of the words in general. But then more particularly, *Perfection*, in the Scripture phraſe, and as it is recommended to us as a Duty, to be purſued and attained to by us in imitation of God ; ſignifies uſually one or other of theſe four *ſpecial* Virtues or Excellencies.

1^{ſt} ; IT ſignifies ſometimes *Purity* and *Holineſs* ; a being ſeparated from, and raiſed above, worldly and ſenſual deſires ; the *keeping ourſelves unſpotted from the World*, as St James expreſſes himſelf ; and fixing our affections upon divine and heavenly and ſpiritual things. Thus, 1 Pet. i. 15. *As he which has called you is holy, ſo be ye holy in all manner of converſation ;* *Because it*
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is written, *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Which words are taken out of the Book of *Leviticus*, where they are repeated three several times, to the children of *Israel*; and answer to that precept which God had before given to *Abraham*, *Gen. xvii. 1. I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect.*

2dly; IN some other places of Scripture, the word, *Perfection*, signifies our conforming ourselves to the example of our Saviour, in *suffering patiently*, when God calls us to it, and parting with all things willingly for *his sake*. Our Saviour himself is described to have been made *perfect by Sufferings*, *Heb. ii. 10.* In prophecying of which before-hand, he expresses it in the same phrase, *Luke xiii. 32. I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.* And warning his Disciples of the persecutions they must expect to meet with, he tells them, *Luke vi. 40. The Disciple is not above his Master; but every one that is perfect, shall be as his Master;* that is, as 'tis explained in the parallel place, *Matt. x. 24.* must expect to be persecuted like him. And giving instruction to the young man, who desired to know what he must do to be perfect; *If thou wilt be perfect, saith he, go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and come and follow me.*

3dly; IN other places of Scripture, because *universal Love* in the highest and most exalted degree; forgiving of injuries, and doing good even to our bitterest Enemies; is one of the great improvements and Excellencies of Duty, which the Christian Religion has introduced, and wherein it exceeds all other Institutions of Religion that ever were in the World; therefore This also is sometimes stiled *Perfection*; and the practice of this Duty is called *being perfect*. Thus the words of the Text seem in their first and most literal Sense to be

understood, by their connexion with what goes before. For when our Saviour had commanded his Disciples, ver. 44. *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust:* he adds immediately in the words of the Text; *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect;* that is, *Imitate ye therefore this excellent perfection of God;* and as *he* does good even to the unholy and unthankful, so do *ye* forgive and do good even to your enemies; For this is the *Perfection* of the Christian State.

Lastly; PERFECTION in other places signifies *Mercy and Goodness, works of Charity and Beneficence;* which the Christian Religion recommends to us with the greatest Earnestness, with the most pressing Arguments, and with the amplest Promises of an exceeding great Reward. This Interpretation of the word, *St Luke* authorises in the parallel place to the Text; where, repeating the very same Discourse of our Saviour; instead of these words *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect,* he expresses it thus; *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful,* Luke vi. 36. And *St Paul*, speaking of the same excellent Duty of Charity, calls it the *bond of Perfection*, Col. iii. 14. *And above all these things put on Charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

IN this latter Sense therefore, I shall take leave to understand the words at this time; and shall accordingly endeavour in the following Discourse, to recommend

mend to you this excellent Duty of Charity, in the following Method.

- 1st. BY showing how many and great Obligations we are continually under, to practise this Duty.
- 2^{dly}. WHAT great Benefits and Advantages accrue to *ourselves*, by the Practice of it. And
- 3^{dly}. IN what particular Methods and Instances, it may best and most usefully be performed.

I. How many and great *Obligations* we are continually under, to practise this Duty. And because they are great and numerous, it may be useful to distinguish them into their proper Heads, as they arise from the consideration either of God, our Neighbour, or ourselves. And

1st. WITH respect to *God*. *Is it not the thing that he has chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry ; and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?* (Is. lviii. 6, 7.) Nothing is more agreeable to the Nature of God, and renders us more conformable to the Excellencies of that most perfect pattern ; than the exercise of Beneficence and Goodness. The Divine Nature is Goodness itself ; and his bountiful Kindness extends itself perpetually over all his works. This is the Attribute which he principally delights to exercise ; and in which, of all others, he most expects and requires we should imitate him. Our Saviour in the Text, and in all his Discourses, proposes this example to us to follow ; and frequently repeats it, that hereby

only we can truly become the children of our Father which is in Heaven. This imitation of God, is the Foundation of all Religion, and the true Spring, the inward and natural Principle and Ground of Happiness: Wherefore we are equally obliged both in Duty and Interest, as we hope to be made Partakers of that Happiness, which is the Perfection of our Nature, and for which God ultimately designed us; to prepare and fit ourselves for it, by acquiring that divine frame and temper of mind, that beneficent and good Disposition, which alone can qualify us and make us capable to enjoy it. This Argument would be equally strong, even though we had an absolute and supreme Right to the things we possess; as God has over the whole Creation. But *we* are further to consider, that this is not *our* Case. *We* are not absolute Lords of the things we possess, but enjoy them merely by the divine permission and good pleasure. We are Stewards intrusted with our portion of good things, under the Supreme Householder the Governour of the Universe; and we are to give a strict account, in what manner we dispose of them. We *may* employ them to all the necessary uses, and all the reasonable conveniences, nay and even to the innocent *diversions* also of Life; but we must not consume them upon Lusts and Follies, and *with-hold good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of our hand to do it*, Prov. iii. 27. Some portions at least of what we enjoy, are due to God, as an acknowledgment of our dependence upon him for the *whole*; and instead of costly Sacrifices and Burnt-offerings to *himself*, he requires only that we be willing to relieve the necessities of *Men like ourselves*; And he seems in the Wisdom of his Providence to have made a very unequal distribution of the Blessings of this Life *on purpose*, that we might have

have continual opportunities of paying this reasonable homage to him, according to our respective Abilities. Thus much were evidently due to him, even tho' we had been innocent and sinless Creatures; But now how greatly is this motive inforced, when we reflect how all the Blessings with which he daily crowns us, were not only *originally* undeserved, but in their *continuance* are perpetual instances of mercy and compassion towards us! When by Sin we had forfeited all title to his Love and Favour, yet still he *causes his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*. And not only continues to us these *temporal* Blessings; but moreover, when we by Sin had ruined ourselves and must have been miserable for ever, sent his Son into the World, to restore us to a capacity of recovering *that* Happiness, which is *eternal*. And now, What shall we render unto the Lord, for all these instances of his Mercy towards us? *Can our Goodness extend to Him? or can a Man be profitable to his Maker?* No; The only way *we* have of expressing our Gratitude towards him, is by exercising some little Similitude of that mercy and compassion towards our *Brethren*, in relieving their *temporal* wants; which he has extended to *us* in an infinitely greater degree, in our necessities *both temporal and eternal*. This he has expressly commanded us by our Saviour and his Apostles, and it fills almost every page both of the Old and New Testament, that it is the return he principally expects from us *for all the benefits that he has done unto us*. This he declares he will accept as the best expression of our Love towards him, and as if the benefit of it had accrued immediately to himself: *He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again*, Prov. xix. 17. and *inasmuch as ye have*

done it to the least of these my Brethren, saith our Saviour, ye have done it unto me, St Matt. xxv. 45. Concerning This, the great Enquiry will be made at the day of Judgment ; and according to our behaviour in this particular, will the final Sentence, as our Saviour himself has described to us the Solemnity of that great day, be principally determined : *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* Not as if any other good or evil Action should then be over-looked by the eye of the All-seeing Judge ; but to intimate to us, that a charitable or uncharitable disposition, is a principal and ruling part of a man's character ; the most considerable Test of the whole frame and temper of his Mind ; with which all other Virtues or Vices respectively, will almost necessarily be connected. To the performance of This Duty, God has in Scripture annexed the promise of more and greater rewards, than are specified in the Exhortations to any other single Virtue ; and to the Neglect of it are made proportionably, the greatest of Threatnings ; that *He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy, and that whose stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.* In the Characters given of good men in Scripture, their exercise of this Duty of Charity, always makes a principal part of their Commendation : *I delivered the poor that cried, says Job, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him : The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widows heart to sing, ch. xxix. ver. 12.* and in the New Testament, the Character of *Cornelius* ; to whom God vouchsafed to send an Apo-
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file on purpose, with a singular Commission; and on whom the Holy Ghost fell, even before his Baptism; was, that he was *a devout man, and one that feared God, and gave much alms to the people.* To conclude this Head: As in all sorts of things, the whole kind usually receives its denomination from that part which is most excellent; so the word *Righteousness* in general, is frequently used in Scripture to signify *Mercy and Charity* in particular; and Charity is affirmed by St Paul to be the *End of the Commandment*; and that *he that loveth his Brother, hath fulfilled the whole Law.*

2dly; WITH respect to our Neighbour, the Obligations we are under to practise this excellent Duty, are likewise great and many. We are all partakers of the same common nature, and are therefore under the same ties of common humanity. God *has made of one blood,* as St Paul expresses it, *all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth,* Acts xvii. 26. and therefore the command in the Text is thus expressed, that we *hide not ourselves from our own Flesh.* We are All subject to the same Infirmities, All liable to fall under the same misfortunes, all obnoxious to the same Wants; and therefore have all of us reason to exercise that compassion, which no man knows but he may stand in need of himself. *The merciful man, saith Solomon, doth good to his own Soul; but he that is cruel, troubleth his own Flesh,* Prov. xi. 17. and the Prophet *Isaiab*, exhorting men to the exercise of Charity, expresses it by *not hiding themselves from their own Flesh,* Is. lviii. 7. God is equally the common Father of us all; and in his Government of the World, *accepteth not the persons of Princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of his hands. The rich and the poor, saith the wise man, do meet together; the Lord*
is

is the Maker of them all, Prov. xxii. 2. So *we* in like manner, are to make no distinction of Persons ; not by behaving ourselves alike towards all ; but by performing with like chearfulness our respective Duty towards all, according to their several Circumstances ; showing with equal readiness compassion to the poor, as we do respect to the Rich, and Honour to those in Power and Authority. God has in the whole an equal regard to all his Creatures ; but in the present State has made an unequal distribution of temporal Blessings, *that one man's abundance should supply another man's want, that there may be an equality*, 2 Cor. viii. 14. By an *Equality* the Apostle does not mean, that Christians are obliged to bring themselves all to a Level ; (though the *first* Converts indeed did so, for reasons particular to those times ;) but He means that there ought to be among them such mutual assistance and relief, as that the wants and necessities of *all*, may be proportionably supplied.

THE Christian Religion has super-added particular Arguments to the general ones drawn from nature and reason, to inforce our Obligation to this Duty. We have *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling* : We are all Members of one body, and *members also one of another*, Rom. xii. 6. We all profess to be Worshipers of that One Supreme God, who *giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not*. We are all redeemed by the blood of that Saviour, and depend upon his merits, for the hope of Salvation ; who voluntarily became poor, that *we* might be made rich ; who *went about doing good* ; who laid down his life for our sakes ; and in all this, set us *an example that we should follow his steps* ; leaving it to his Disciples as his last Commandment and most earnest request, that they would

love

love one another as he had loved them; making it the Badge and distinguishing Mark, whereby all men should know that they were his disciples, if they had love one towards another; and declaring it to be the Sum and End of that Religion, which he came to establish in the World, that we should *love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as our selves*. These considerations, if we will be Christians indeed, cannot but produce in us the greatest Endearments of mutual affection; and those, if they be sincere, must necessarily show forth themselves in suitable effects. *We ought, if need were, even to lay down our lives for the brethren*, saith St John, 1 John iii. 16. But how do we answer this character, if, when we see our Brother in want, we are not willing to part with any of the Superfluities of life, to relieve his Necessities, for whom Christ was not unwilling to die? In the Primitive Times the Disciples sold all that they had, and distribution was made to every one according as he had need: God does not now require, any such thing of us; but we are very ungrateful to him, if, when the circumstances of things are so changed, that far less is required of us; we be now more unwilling to contribute our *small* proportion, than they were then to offer up their *whole* estates. The least we can do, is to give such *experiment of this ministration*, as St Paul expresses himself, that men may glorify God for our *professed Subjection to the Gospel of Christ, and for our liberal distribution to our brethren and to all men*; 2 Cor. ix. 13.

3dly; WITH respect to *ourselves*, the Obligations incumbent upon us to be charitable and beneficent, are very considerable. Compassion is by the Wisdom of the great Creator, implanted in the very frame of our Nature; and men cannot without great and long habits
of

of Wickedness, root out of their minds so noble and excellent an inclination. 'Tis almost as natural for us to feel an agreeable Satisfaction and unexpressible Pleasure of mind, upon *satisfying a hungry Soul with bread, or cloathing the naked with a garment* ; as 'tis for *Them* to be pleased with the Sense of their being relieved from these natural wants. And the greater abilities and opportunities God has endued any man with, of enlarging his bowels of compassion, and doing good to greater numbers of his Fellow-creatures, and diffusing his virtue more widely through the World in acts of bounty and beneficence, in imitation of the great Creator and Preserver of all things ; the greater Capacities and Advantages has such a one, of obtaining higher degrees of that Satisfaction and Complacency of mind, in the perfection of which consists in great measure the Happiness of God himself. On the contrary, *what* pleasure, *what* benefit is there in the possession of those good things, which after supplying our own necessities, and making reasonable provision for our families, are laid up as useless and unprofitable superfluities ? Concerning which, *What good, saith the wise man, is there in them to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes ?* Real Good indeed, and any true advantage, there seldom is ; but very many times great mischief, and strong temptations. *There is a sore evil, saith Solomon, which I have seen under the Sun ; riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt : And they that will be rich, saith St Paul, fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts ; which drown men in Destruction and Perdition.* If we intend only to secure ourselves, against future contingencies ; a reasonable provision of this kind, is neither contrary to religion, nor inconsistent with charity ; but beyond this, an un-
bounded

bounded desire of heaping up great riches, is by no means so advantageous in this very respect, as a charitable dispensing them in wise proportions would be. For such is the instability of all temporal things, that, as the wise man elegantly expresses it, *Riches make themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards Heaven*; that is, we cannot with all our Care, secure them to ourselves for any certain time; much less are *Riches for ever*, or do our possessions endure for all generations. We know not how soon they may be snatch'd from *Us*, by numberless unforeseen Accidents; or we may as suddenly be taken from *them*, and our Soul be required of us this very Night. In this Case no other part of them will be really beneficial to us, but that which by works of Charity hath been before lent unto *the Lord*, who in the Life to come will repay it again. And even in respect of our continuance in this present World, That which has been well laid out in doing Good to Mankind, has a greater Probability of turning to our Advantage even *here*; (considering the variety of Accidents all human Affairs are subject to;) than that which may have been covetously treasured up. For, as Solomon excellently expresses this matter, *Cast thy bread upon the Waters, and thou shalt find it after many days; Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth*, Eccles. xi. 1. and iii. 31. *He that doth good turns, is mindful of that which may come hereafter; and when he falleth, he shall find a stay.* But this leads me to the

II^d THING I propos'd to speak to, namely, what great Benefits and Advanttg'es accrue to ourselves, by the Practice of this excellent Duty. And these I have but time barely to mention. And

1st ; As has already been hinted ; the Charitable man in the natural and ordinary course of things, lays up for himself a truer Security against the Accidents of the World, in the Love and Favour, the Affection and Good-Will of Men ; than he could do by hoarding up the largest treasures. For these he may be robbed of by many Accidents ; but *he which giveth to the poor, shall not lack*, saith Solomon ; and *he that deviseth liberal things, shall be stand*, saith the Prophet, *by liberal things shall be stand*.

2^{dly} : HE leaves behind him an honourable memory, which will be a benefit to his Children and Posterity after him. *He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever, his horn shall be exalted with honour : His seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed*, Ps. cxii. 9, 2. And this, humanly speaking, even in the natural consequence and tendency of things. But

3^{dly} ; SUCH a person has moreover special Promises of the particular Blessing and Protection of Providence to himself and his posterity. *The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself*, Prov. xi. 25. *If thou draw out thy Soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted Soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy Soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not*, II. lviii. 10. *Be as a Father unto the Fatherless, and instead of a Husband unto their Mother ; so shalt thou be as the Son of the most High, and he will love thee more than thy Mother doth*, Eccclus. iv. 10. But because now under the Gospel, temporal Blessings are not dispensed with the same certainty and regularity, as in the time of the Jews ; therefore

4^{thly} ;

4thly ; THE Duty of Charity has likewise the largest promises of the Life to come. He that soweth bountifully, saith St Paul, shall reap bountifully : And our Saviour affirms of them that abound in this grace, that they make to themselves bags which wax not old ; and lay up a treasure that faileth not, in the heavens, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal. And, as was before observed, in his description of the process at the great Judgment, he represents our Behaviour in this one respect, as that which will principally determine the final and irreverfible Sentence at that dreadful Day.

Laſtly, THE Scripture frequently intimates, that Charity is one of the beſt Inſtruments of Repentance, and of aſſuring to us the pardon of paſt Sins. ‘ Break off thy Sins by Repentance, ſaid Daniel to the King of Babylon, and thine iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor. Water will quench a flaming fire, ſaith the wiſe Son of Sirach, and alms maketh an atonement for Sins, Ecclus. iii. 39. Bleſſed are the merciful, ſaith our Saviour himſelf, for they ſhall obtain mercy.’ And Charity, ſaith St Peter, ſhall cover the multitude of Sins. The meaning is not, that Charity will excuſe any man’s continuance in Sin ; but that it is an excellent mark and evidence of the Truth and Sincerity of our Repentance, and will afford us greater comfort and aſſurance in the expectation of the full pardon of Sins paſt and forſaken. And in this Senſe we are to underſtand thoſe Words of the Author of the Book of Eccleſiaſticus, ch. xxix. ver. 9. ‘ Help the poor for the commandments ſake, and turn him not away becauſe of his poverty. Lay up thy treasure according to the commandment of the moſt high, and it ſhall bring thee more profit than gold. Shut up alms in thy ſtore-houſes, and it ſhall

‘ deliver thee from all affliction. It shall fight for thee
‘ against thine enemies, better than a mighty shield and
‘ strong spear.’ It remains in the

*III*d and *last* place, THAT we consider briefly, in what particular Methods and Instances, this Duty may best and most usefully be performed. And here, the several manners of performing this Duty, are as various as the necessities of those who want to be relieved. We are to visit the sick, to relieve the needy, to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked, to comfort the afflicted, to instruct the ignorant, to reprove the wicked ; in a word, to do every thing that we can observe will be beneficial to the Body or to the Soul of our Brother ; as the Providence of God shall offer us opportunities, or as every man’s Prudence shall direct him in the choise of objects on which to dispose his Charity. Concerning which there are no certain rules to be given ; but every man has his Liberty to employ his bounty in such manner, as to himself shall seem best, and most useful to the purposes he is chiefly desirous to promote. Only here I must not omit to observe, that there is one comprehensive method of Charity, which in its extent and effects is a compendium of all the instances of beneficence in one ; and That is the education of poor children, to which your contribution is now desired. This is *feeding the hungry, and cloathing the naked with a garment* ; this is instructing the ignorant, and propagating the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ ; This is early sowing the Seeds of virtue and piety, and preventing the first beginnings of those habits of wickedness, which afterwards perhaps no Zeal for Reformation of manners would ever be able to root out ; This is preventing idleness and poverty, and all their consequent ill effects ; and (by a double benefit) making those to be
useful

useful members of the publick, who otherwise might be a burden and a hindrance to it. This is at once relieving the necessities of the present generation, and preventing the wants of those which are to come. To *this* therefore we are exhorted by all those arguments *in conjunction*, which *singly* incite us to dispense our Charity in any particular instances. To this we are invited by all the considerations of publick benefit, and by all the Motives of Religion. To this we are encouraged by the united force of all those promises at once, which in Scripture are made upon diverse occasions to the several methods of exercising Mercy and Charity. Which that they may have their full effect and influence upon us, *God of his infinite mercy, &c.*

SERMON XVIII.

Of the Necessity of Offences arising against the Gospel.

LUKE xvii. 1.

*It is impossible but that Offences will come ;
but wo unto Him through whom they come.*

AS, in matters of *Property and Civil Right*, it cannot be but Wars and Desolations will arise among Men ; the Cause of which Calamities ought always to be charged, not upon Him who happens to strike the first stroke, but upon Him who by Oppression, Pride, and Ambition, unjustly incroaching upon his Neighbour's Rights, makes the Breach unavoidable : So, in matters of *Religion* likewise, it is impossible but that Offences *will* come. The Progress of the *Gospel*, and the Prevailing of *Truth* in the World, *will* be hindred by the ill behaviour of *Some* ; And the Practice of *Righteousness*, among those who have already embraced the Truth in Profession, *will* be discouraged by the Corruption and Perverseness of *Others*. But *Wo be to that man*, says our Saviour,

through whom these Offences come: *Wo be to Him*, who by his Wickedness hinders the Propagation of *Truth*, or the practice of *Virtue*. Concerning *Other Sinners*, and such as through Infirmary fall into Errors of all kinds, our Saviour always speaks with great *Tenderness* and *Compassion*; treating them, as a Physician does a weak Patient, with all possible Gentleness and Care. But those who through *Pride* and a *Tyrannical Spirit* oppose and set themselves against the *Truth*, or through *Ambition* and for worldly Ends persist in things which necessarily cause *Divisions* and *Contentions* among *Christians*, or by profligate Living corrupt and debauch Mankind; against those through whom *such Offences* come, he always denounces the most severe *Wo*.

THE word, *Offence*, in its general and most usual acceptation, signifies every *Sin*, every *Action* whereby God is offended or displeased. But in the *Text*, it seems more particularly to be meant of *such Sins*, as are occasions either of deterring men from embracing the *Gospel*, or of tempting them to disobey it. For so our Saviour in the very next words, after he had declared *Wo be to Him through whom Offences come*, explains it by adding, ver. 2. *Better were it for him, that a millstone were banged about his neck, and he cast into the Sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones*; that he should offend them, that is, that he should cast a *stumbling-block* before them; so the word *literally* signifies; that he should cause them to sin, that he should discourage them in their duty, that he should tempt them to offend God. In the *old law*, it is written, *Deut. xxvii. 18. Cursed be He that maketh the blind to wander out of the way*; and *Lev. xix. 14. Thou shalt not put a stumbling-block before the Blind,*
but

but shall fear thy God. In the literal sense, the Commandment is right, and, no doubt, intended in the Law : But the *spiritual* sense is of more importance, and perhaps ultimately intended in the *Law itself* ; Cursed be He, that by his Example or Authority, maketh the Weak to wander out of the way of Righteousness. In the *parallel* place of St Matthew's Gospel, our Saviour still more expressly explains This to be the meaning of the Text ; ch. xviii. 6. *Whoso*, says he, *shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me* ; one of these *little ones* ; that is, any plain and sincere Christian, such a one as in the foregoing part of his Discourse he had compared for simplicity and sincerity to a little Child ; *Whoso*, says he, *shall offend one of these little ones* ; whoso shall draw or lead such a one into Sin, better were it for him that a millstone were banged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. And then he goes on, ver. 7. *It must needs be that Offences come ; but Wo to that man, by whom,* (not, by whose occasion perhaps, but by whose Fault,) *the Offence cometh.* In which passage what he means by *Offence*, he again explains, ver. 10. — *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; take heed lest ye think it a light thing, a Matter of small consequence, to draw them into Sin : for I say unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven ; that is, those mean and sincere persons, whom ye have so little regard for, are the Care of Angels, and under the Protection of God.*

BUT to consider more distinctly the words of the Text : *It is impossible*, says our Saviour, *but that Offences will come ; but Wo unto Him, Wo to That Man, or Body of Men, thro' whom they come.* In Discour-
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ing upon these words, it will be proper to show particularly, 1st, *What* the principal of those *Offences* are, which hinder the propagation of the Gospel of Truth : 2^{dly}, In *what* Sense our Saviour must be understood to affirm, that 'tis *impossible* but such offences *will* come ; or, as 'tis expressed in St *Matthew*, that it must *needs* be that Offences come. 3^{dly}, Why a *particular Wo* is, by way of *emphasis and distinction*, denounced against the Persons *by whom* these Offences come. 4^{thly} and *lastly*, I shall draw some *particular Inferences* from the Whole.

I. IN the *First* place, it will be proper to consider, *what* the principal of those *Offences* are, which hinder the Propagation of the Gospel of Truth. And though *every thing* that is faulty in *any* kind, does in its measure and degree contribute to This Evil ; yet whoever considers the State of the Christian World, and the History of the Church in all Ages from the Beginning, will find that the Great *Offences*, (or, as the original word literally signifies, the *Stumbling-Blocks*) which have all along chiefly hindered the Progress of true Christianity, are these which follow.

1st, *Corruption of Doctrine*. The Gospel of Christ, as taught by himself, and his Apostles in its original Plainness and Purity, is a Doctrine of Truth and Simplicity, a Doctrine so easy to be understood, so reasonable to be practised, so agreeable to the natural notions and reason of Mankind, so beneficial in its effects if men were really governed by it ; teaching them nothing but the Worship of the True God, thro' the Mediation of Christ ; and towards each Other, Justice, Righteousness, Meekness, Charity, and universal Good-Will ; in expectation of a future judgment, and of a lasting State of Happiness in a better World, for them

who

who love God and keep his Commandments : This Doctrine of Christ, I say, in its native Simplicity and Purity, is so reasonable, so excellent, and of such irresistible Evidence ; that had it never been *corrupted* by Superstitions from *within*, it never could have been opposed by Power from *without* ; but it must of necessity have *captivated* Mankind, *to the obedience of Faith* ; 'till the *knowledge of the Lord had filled the Earth, as the Waters cover the Sea*. But Offences soon came, and the Enemy sowed Tares among this Wheat. The Jewish Believers, even in the Apostles own times, contended for the Necessity of observing the *rites and ceremonies of the Law of Moses* ; And This gave just Offence to the Gentiles, and deterred them from readily embracing the Gospel. Others, built *hay and stubble* upon the foundation of Christ ; bringing in *mixtures of Jewish Fables*, and *questions that ministred strife*, rather than *godly edifying* ; and introducing (after the Example of the Pharisees,) *will-worship*, and *voluntary humilities*, and *commandments of Men* ; which, like a Cloud, darkned the clear Light, and obscured the inexpressible native beauty, of the *glorious Gospel of Christ*. After This, Other Offences arose from among the Gentile-Converts, who by degrees corrupting themselves after the Similitude of the Heathen-Worshippers, introduced Saints and Images, and Pompous Ceremonies, and Grandour into the Church, instead of true Virtue and Righteousness of Life. Concerning These, our Saviour speaks, Rev. ii. 14. *Thou hast them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto Idols, and to commit fornication* : By *fornication*, meaning *spiritual fornication*, or corruption of the plain

plain and uniform Worship of God. These were *Offences indeed* ; Offences, which gave occasion at length, to the rise and growth of the *Turkish Empire*, in opposition to Christianity ; Offences, which have all along prevented the Remains of the Nation of the *Jeros*, from universally embracing the Profession of Christ's Religion : Offences, which together with the introducing of dark and unintelligible Doctrines, and the requiring of blind Submission to an *Infallible Guide*, instead of exhorting men to study seriously the *word of God*, and to live in the Practice of all *virtue and righteousness* in expectation of that Great Day when God shall judge every man according to his Works ; ended at last in that Great and General Corruption, which the Scripture calls, *Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth*. This therefore is the *First Great Offence*, which hinders the propagation of the Gospel of Truth : *Corruption of Doctrine* ; or, Destroying the Plainness and Simplicity of the religion of Christ.

2dly, THE Next is ; *Divisions, Contentions, and Animosities* among Christians ; arising from Pride, and from a Desire of Dominion, and from building matters of an uncertain nature, and of humane Invention upon the Foundation of Christ. Other Foundation, says the Apostle, *can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ*. Upon This foundation, *the whole Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord* ; supported by Righteousness and true Virtue, and united in one Holy Bond of Charity and Love. By This, says our Saviour, *shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another*. And St John tells us, *that God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God*. And St Paul declares, that

that Love is the Fulfilling of the Law, Rom. xiii. 8 ; For, all the Commandments, says he, *Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, and so on ; and if there be any other commandment, they are all briefly comprehended in This Saying, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* Did men rightly understand *This* to be the Great End of Christ's Religion, and sincerely endeavour to practise it accordingly ; whence then could *Heats and Enmities, Contentions and Animosities*, possibly arise among *Christians* ; among those, whose Religion teaches them nothing but Meekness, Goodness, and Charity ; Charity towards their brethren, and Meekness even to those that oppose themselves ? St James shows us the only Spring, from whence Contentions arise ; ch. iv. i. From whence, says he, come wars and fightings among you ? come they not hence, even from your Lusts ? from the Lust of Dominion, and Temporal Power ; from the Lust of Contentiousness, Peevishness, or Ambition ; from the Lust of being Lords over each other's Faith, instead of being Helpers towards the common Salvation. Rom. xvi. 17 : Mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; (that is, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned of Christ and his Apostles ;) Mark those, who, contrary to This Doctrine, cause Divisions, by laying the great Stress, in matters of Religion, upon Commandments and Traditions of Men, Col. ii. 8. Almost all Heats and uncharitable Contentions among Christians, have in all Ages sprung from this Root ; not so much concerning the Commandments of God, which are plain and easy to be understood by All ; as about the Impositions, and the Authority of Men. These have been the great Offence, which has hindred the Conversion of the World to Christ ; while Infidel Nations observe,

observe, that Christians who preach that their Religion is *Charity*, yet *bate* and *revile* and *persecute* each other. The *Great Offence*, I say, which in all Nations and in all Ages has hindered the propagation of the Gospel of Truth, has been a hypocritical Zeal to secure by Force a fictitious uniformity of opinion, which is indeed impossible in nature ; instead of the real Christian Unity of Sincerity, Charity, and mutual Forbearance, *which is the bond of perfectness*.

3dly, THE Third and Last great Offence I shall mention, by which the propagation of true Religion is hindered ; is the *vicious* and *debauched Lives*, (not of *Christians*, for That is a contradiction ; but) of those who for Form's sake *profess* themselves to be so. For as the good *Lives* of those who stile themselves the Servants of God, are a *Light shining before men*, causing them to *glorify the God of Heaven*, and to admire a Religion which is of such great Benefit to Mankind : So, on the contrary, the *vicious* and *corrupt Practices* of those who call themselves Christians, cannot but raise a Prejudice against, and cast a Reproach upon, the Religion which seems to have so little influence upon the Lives of its Professors. Among those who are *already Believers*, the minds of the Weak are by such ill Examples corrupted, tempted, and emboldened to sin ; being by degrees made less *sensible* of the *Danger* of Wickedness, and edified *as it were* unto destruction : So St Paul most elegantly expresses himself in the instance of Idolatry ; 1 Cor. viii. 10. *Shall not the conscience of him that is Weak, be edified*, (that is the word in the original, and in the margin of our Bibles,) shall he not *be* edified, *i. e.* be led on by degrees, to eat things offered unto Idols ? And by the same means, that the *Manners* of Believers are corrupted ;

rupted ; Infidels are at the same confirmed in their *Unbelief*, and emboldened to despise and mock at all Religion. By *this Deed*, said the prophet *Nathan* to *David*, reproving him for his Adultery and Murder ; by *This Deed thou hast given great occasion to the Enemies of the Lord* to blaspheme, 2 Sam. xii. 14. And by reason of the Wickedness of *Eli's Sons*, 'tis recorded that *men* abhorred *the Offering of the Lord*, 1 Sam. ii. 17. And, speaking of the Corruption of the *Jewish Nation* ; *The Heathen*, says God by *Ezekiel*, profaned *my holy Name*, when they said to them, *These are the people of the Lord*. (ch. xxxvi. 20.) Which passage of the Prophet, *St Paul* cites and applies to wicked Christians, Rom. ii. 23. *Through breaking the Law, dishonourest thou God ? For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through You, as it is written*. And the same Argument he urges likewise in other of his Epistles ; Exhorting men to the practice of Righteousness and Holiness, that They of the contrary part may be ashamed, and that the word of God may be not blasphemed, Tit. ii. 5, 8. and 1 Tim. vi. 1. *that the Name of God ; and his Doctrine, be not blasphemed*.

To conclude this Head ; our Saviour in his Parable, where he compares the End of the World to the Time of Harvest, describes Iniquity under the character of an *Offence* or *Scandal*, in the sense I am now speaking of ; 'The Son of man, saith he, shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, (in the original it is, all Scandals,) and them which do iniquity.' Matt. xiii. 41.

II. HAVING thus at large explained what is meant in the Text by the word, *Offences* ; I proceed in the Second place to consider in what sense our Saviour must be understood to affirm, that 'tis impossible but such

Offences will come ; or, as 'tis expressed in St Matthew, that it must needs be that Offences come. And here there have been some so absurdly unreasonable, as to understand this of a *proper* and *natural* Necessity ; as if God had *ordained* that Offences should come, and had accordingly *predestinated* particular men to commit them. But This, is directly charging God with the Sins of Men ; and making Him, not *themselves*, the Author of Evil. The plain meaning of our Saviour, when he affirms it to be *impossible* but that Offences *will* come, is This only ; that, considering the State of the World, the Number of Temptations, the Freedom of mens Will, the Frailty of their Nature, the Perverseness and Obstinacy of their Affections ; it cannot be *expected*, it cannot be *supposed*, it cannot be *hoped*, but that Offences *will* come ; tho' it be very unreasonable they *should* come. Men need not, men ought not to corrupt the Doctrine of Christ ; they need not dishonour their Religion, by unchristian Heats, Contentions, and Animosities among themselves ; much less is there any Necessity that they should live contrary to it, by vicious and debauched Practices : And yet, morally speaking, it cannot be but that all these things *will* happen. The manner of using the like Expressions in other places of Scripture, does evidently and beyond contradiction shew This to be the true Sense of the words. Thus our Saviour, St Mar. xiii. 7. speaking of Wars and Tumults, *When ye shall hear, says he, of Wars and Rumours of Wars, be ye not troubled ; For such things must needs be : They must needs be ;* that is, not that God has laid upon men any necessity of quarrelling ; but that, from the Wickedness of the World, nothing better can be expected. St John, by a like manner of speaking, tells us of some persons so far

far improved in Virtue, that they cannot sin ; (1 Joh. iii. 9.) and St Peter, of Others so extremely corrupted, that they cannot cease from Sin : (2 Pet. ii. 14.) and our Saviour himself, of Rich persons, for whom, with men, that is, *humanely speaking*, it is impossible to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. (Mat. xix. 23.) All which expressions most evidently signify, not *natural Impossibilities*, but *moral Improbabilities* only. To mention but One place more ; *It cannot be*, says our Lord, St Luke xiii. 33 ; *it cannot be, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem* : His meaning is This only ; that Jerusalem was then so very wicked and corrupt a place, that it would be a very strange thing, a thing hardly to be imagined, that a Prophet should be slain in any other City. And Thus therefore likewise in the words of the Text, *It is impossible but that Offences will come* : That is to say ; In the course of a World, wherein (according to the nature of a Probation-state) all men are free, and among Them some are weak, and many will be wicked ; it cannot be expected but that Offences must come. And 'tis very reasonable for the Providence of God to permit it so to be, for the Trial and Improvement of the Sincere : 1 Cor. xi. 19. *There must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest* : The meaning is ; There will be Factions, Parties, and Animosities, arising among worldly and contentious men from the Love of Power and Dominion : And by These, (by suffering These sometimes to prevail almost universally, and to exalt themselves with great Power and Authority in the World,) the Providence of God tries and distinguishes, *who* are Lovers of the Truth, and Goodness, and Meekness of the Gospel, and *who* on the

contrary are of worldly, factious, and ambitious Tempers.

III. I PROPOSED to consider in the *Third* place, *why* a particular *Wo* is, by way of Emphasis and Distinction, denounced against the Persons *by whom* these Offences come : *Wo unto Him, Wo to That Man, or That Body of Men*, whosoever or of how great Power soever they be, thro' *whom the Offences come*. That, *in general*, those who by their ill Behaviour bring reproach upon the Gospel of Christ, are *worthy of Punishment*, notwithstanding the *Necessity* of such Offences coming ; appears from what has been shown under the fore-going Head ; *viz.* that the *Necessity* of Offences coming, is not that *God* lays a *necessity* upon any Man *to be wicked*, (which would indeed excuse the *Man*, and transfer the Fault upon *God himself*;) but only declares, that mens voluntary *wickedness and corruption* is such, that it *cannot be expected* but Offences *will* come. We have an extraordinary instance of This kind, in the case of *Judas*. *God decreed* that the Son of Man should be betrayed to Death ; and accordingly *foretold* by the Prophets, that One of his Followers should betray him. Yet *God* did not predestinate *Judas* to be *wicked* ; But *Christ*, in order to accomplish the Will of *God*, chose on purpose one such Disciple whose Heart he knew was *wicked*, and gave him (as might have been given to any *other* wicked man) an *opportunity* to betray him. Thus both the Will of *God* was accomplished in the Death of *Christ* ; and yet *Judas*, like other wicked men, acted merely from the *Wickedness* of his own Heart, and therefore had no Excuse for his Crime : *Matt. xxvi. 24.* ' The Son of man ' goeth, as it is written of him ; but *Wo unto that* ' man by Whom the Son of man is betrayed ; it had ' been

' been good for that man, if he had not been born.' The *expression* is of the *same* kind, and the *manner* of *arguing* the *same*, as in the words of the Text ; ' It is impossible but that Offences will come, but Wo unto Him through whom they come ; It were better for him that a milstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the Sea ;' that is, better were it for him, that he had never been born, or that he had quickly perished by some untimely Death. Thus it appears plainly *in general*, that the *Necessity* here mentioned of Offences coming, is *no Excuse* for those, by whose Wickedness they come.

BUT then further, the reason why a *particular Wo*, by way of *Emphasis and Distinction*, is denounced against the Persons, *by whom* the Offences here spoken of arise ; is because they are Offences of an *extensive* Nature ; hindrances to the propagation of the Gospel ; Sins, not only in the persons who immediately commit them, but *Stumbling-blocks* causing *Others* to sin likewise, and promoting in general the Cause of Satan. Now if *they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine* (as the Scripture assures us,) with a distinguished Glory *as the Stars for ever and ever* ; and *he that converteth a Sinner from the Errour of his Way, shall hide a multitude of Sins* : for the same reason, they who by *corrupt Practices*, or by *absurd and unreasonable Doctrines*, (contrary to the express Command of our Saviour, ' Call no man Father upon Earth, for One is your Father which is in Heaven ; and be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ :' They, I say, who by introducing Doctrines upon the Authority of *men*, contrary to this express Command of Christ,) deter men from believing the Gospel, and prevent them from coming

coming into the way of righteousness; deserve justly in proportion a greater Condemnation.

IV. THE Inferences I shall draw from what has been said, are :

1st, FROM the explication which has been given of these words of our Saviour, *It is impossible but that Offences will come*; we may learn, not to charge God with Evil; nor to ascribe to any Decree of His, the Wickedness and Impieties of Men. And whenever any Text of Scripture may possibly in the literal Sense to a careless Reader seem to give countenance to any such Notion, we must always be careful to compare with it other Expressions of the like nature, which will be found in other parallel places of Scripture; and then the true Sense of Both, will easily appear, even to a mean Understanding.

2^{dly}, SINCE our Saviour has forewarned us, that it *must needs be* that such Offences will come, as may prove Stumbling-blocks to the weak and unattentive; let us take care, since we have received this Warning, not to stumble or be offended at them. Let us not, because Christians (as they call themselves) *will* lead wicked lives, and *will* be contentious for dominion over each other's Faith, and *will* introduce blind, corrupt, and unintelligible Doctrines; let us not, I say, upon any of *these* Accounts, which our Saviour has so plainly forewarned us of; let us not think at all the worse of Christianity itself, of the true, the plain, the peaceable, the universally charitable and beneficent Doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

3^{dly}, AND above all; As we ought not to take, so much more ought we to be careful that we never give,
any

any of these Offences. Let not any of them who call themselves Christians, live *vicious and debauched lives*. Let us not sow *Divisions*, by endeavouring to impose upon each Other in matters of Faith, and by *lording it* (as the Apostle expresses himself) *over the heritage of God*. Let us not, by departing from the unerring Rules of *Reason and Scripture*, corrupt the plain and beautiful Doctrine of Christ; but endeavour always to keep it in that *original Simplicity*, wherein he himself has delivered it in such a manner, as to be level to the capacity even of the meanest Understandings. Nay, let us *not only* not *give* any of these Offences, but let us by all possible means endeavour diligently to *prevent* them. Our Saviour exhorts us, in the words immediately following the Text, as they are recorded in St *Matthew's* Gospel, ch. xviii. 8; 'If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; and if thine Eye offend thee, pluck it out:' that is, (as appears from the connexion of these words with those of the Text;) how great worldly Temptations soever, any *Man* or any *Body of men* may have, to do any thing which will offend or hinder Others from embracing the Gospel; yet do it not. Abstain, (not indeed from any thing which is *necessary* in order to preserve either the *Truth and Simplicity of the Gospel*, or the *Practice of Righteousness*; but abstain,) both from imposing and from practising, even things *innocent and indifferent*, if doing otherwise will accidentally be a prejudice to true Religion: Rom. xiv. 21. 'It is good, neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, (*much less to insist on any needless Doctrine or Ceremony*,) nor any thing whereby thy Brother stumbleth or is offended, or is made Weak.' For my own part, says St Paul, 'if meat make my Brother to

' offend,

‘offend, I will eat no Flesh while the World standeth, rather than make my Brother offend.’ To conclude: *Provide things honest*, says the Apostle, *in the Sight of all men.* Have a good Report from them that are without, that is, even from Unbelievers themselves. In a word; *Give no offence*, says he, *neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.*

The End of the SIXTH VOLUME.



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